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The Editors on Post-Zarqawi Iraq

NATIONAL REVIEW

SAVE THIS HOUSE

How Republicans
Can Revive Their
Congressional Majority

Kate O'Beirne & Richard Lowry

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■ COVER STORY

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A Fight to the Finish

If voters in November are as disapproving of Congress and President Bush as the public is now, nothing will stop the tide that sweeps away the Republican majority. The warning signs are everywhere. *Kate O'Beirne & Richard Lowry*



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letters to the editor

CLARIFICATION

My article "Scare of the Century" (June 5) quoted University of Virginia climate scientist Patrick J. Michaels as saying that "Antarctica has been gaining ice," and, based on Michaels's view, called 2002 a "high-water mark for Antarctic ice." Michaels cited a study by Curt Davis to support his position. Davis subsequently noted that his study did not measure ice changes over all of Antarctica. It showed that a large part of the East Antarctic ice sheet was growing while much of the West Antarctic ice sheet was shrinking. Davis wrote in his study that, if the observed growth pattern held for all of East Antarctica, it would outweigh estimated ice loss in West Antarctica; but he did not conclusively prove this to be the case. The argument in "Scare of the Century," however, did not depend on Davis's study; in fact, it noted that research subsequent to Davis's shows a current net ice loss for Antarctica. Regardless of whether Antarctica was gaining ice between 1992 and 2003, all of the following are true: 1) Measures of Antarctica's total ice mass exist only for the last three years, a period too short to prove the existence of a climate trend; 2) natural phenomena can be invoked to explain a significant portion of observed ice-cap melting; 3) the evidence does not establish that sea levels will rise to a dangerous level in the foreseeable future; and 4) CO2 caps along the lines of the Kyoto Protocol would have a negligible effect on climate.

Jason Lee Steorts

ON ICE

Scientists can speak authoritatively only when backed by quantitative logic. In the case of ice balance for Antarctica, one thing is clear: Every modern climate model predicts that Antarctica will gain ice in the 21st century, resulting in a slight lowering of sea levels (which will,

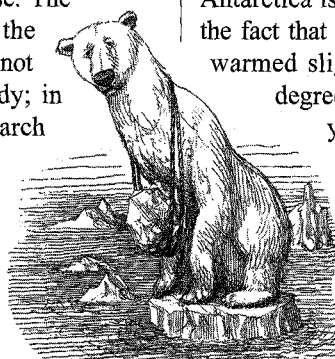
nonetheless, be largely compensated for as slightly warmer surface temperatures cause ocean waters to expand).

The oft-cited finding that Antarctica is losing ice is based on 34 quasi-monthly satellite observations beginning in mid-2002. But, as shown in the record for East Antarctica, which is the largest ice cap on the planet, mid-2002 represents the high point of snow accumulation for at least the last decade. While we cannot be absolutely certain that this accumulation outweighed ice loss in West Antarctica, we have reason to believe that it did. In any case, we should be cautious in drawing conclusions from a three-year sample beginning at a relative peak.

Increased snow accumulation in Antarctica is a logical consequence of the fact that the surrounding ocean has warmed slightly—an average of 0.3 degrees Celsius—in the last 40 years. That results in more moisture in the atmosphere, which, when uplifted over Antarctica, causes greater snowfall. It is widely accepted in scientific circles that this is taking place. This phenomenon may also

explain the well-known fact that, averaged over the entire continent, Antarctica has been cooling for decades. The clouds that produce snow reflect more radiation than they trap, resulting in net cooling.

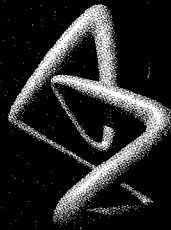
Patrick J. Michaels
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Charlottesville, Va.



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What Does This Stand For?



THE WEEK

■ Let's just classify Zarqawi's martyrdom as an *assisted* suicide.

■ How quickly things change. Top White House aide Karl Rove was under investigation in the CIA leak probe for years—the investigation will mark its third anniversary this fall. But then, on June 13, faster than you can say “frog-march,” we learned that prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald has decided not to take any action against the president's chief political adviser. It was certainly a big relief for Rove and the White House—just consider the political misery that would have accompanied any charges against Rove—but it was an even bigger disappointment for Democrats who had been hoping to see, in the immortal words of former ambassador Joseph Wilson, “Karl Rove frog-marched out of the White House in handcuffs.” So what's next? Democrats are clearly upset that such a high-profile investigation has yielded just one indictment (Lewis Libby) for perjury and no charges of any underlying crime. Trying to salvage whatever is left of the “scandal,” New York senator Charles Schumer wants a full report from Fitzgerald so that anyone involved who wasn't charged might still be, in Schumer's words, “given the appropriate punishment.” But Democrats should face reality. If this investigation ends without any more charges, it will be time for them to give it up and move on. That's what they used to say, isn't it? Move on?

■ The victory of Republican Brian Bilbray in a special election to fill an empty House seat representing San Diego was by no means inevitable. The seat was left vacant following the Duke Cunningham bribery scandal; Bilbray is a former congressman who became a lobbyist (not a popular way to make a living); Democratic nominee Francine Busby ran an energetic and well-funded campaign; and national polls continue to suggest that Democrats will fare well this fall. Yet Busby attracted only 45 percent of the vote—not much better than John Kerry did in 2004, when he carried 44 percent of the district. Republicans would be wrong, however, to assume that they can rest easy: Bilbray prevailed in large measure because the national GOP pumped \$4.5 million into his campaign, which it will surely not be able to do for every candidate. But these candidates can make one useful observation about the win: Bilbray campaigned on the need for strong immigration enforcement; his opponent committed a fatal gaffe by telling a group of Hispanics, “You don't need papers for voting.” The majority registered its preference.

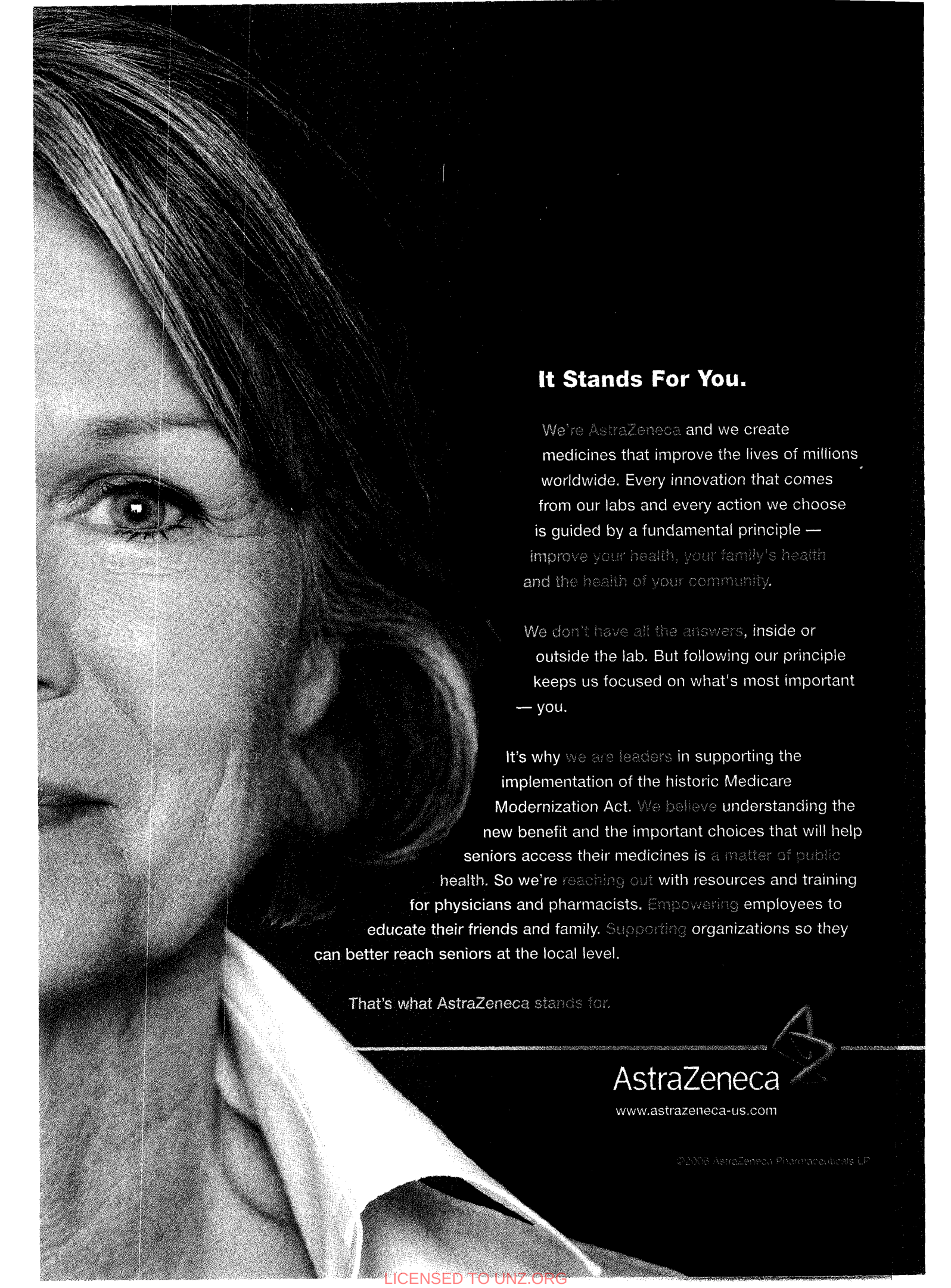
■ The Marine staff sergeant who led the squad in Haditha has now, through his attorney, provided his side of the story of how 24 Iraqi civilians ended up dead. His account directly contradicts news reports based on Iraqi eyewitnesses and



This land is our land . . . (see page 10).

leaks from the military's criminal investigation. Staff Sgt. Frank Wuterich insists that his Marines were fired on from inside a house, and strictly followed the rules of engagement in response. He flatly denies the claim, made by Rep. Jack Murtha (D., Pa.) and others, that his Marines “killed innocent civilians in cold blood.” He also denies that he ever misled his superiors about the events. In the face of conflicting accounts and ongoing investigations, a few reminders are in order. First, the Marines have earned the benefit of the doubt. Second, Iraqi civilians have on other occasions leveled false charges against American troops. Third, even the Marine Corps leadership can get it wrong when serious allegations are made. Marine 2nd Lt. Ilario Pantano was charged with the premeditated murder of two Iraqi civilians. Five days into his hearing, the charges were dropped. Semper Fi.

■ If Republicans were having a good year, they would have prevailed in abolishing the estate tax permanently. But they are not, and too few red-state Democratic senators were afraid



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THE WEEK...

of their challengers for repeal to get 60 votes. Under current law, the tax will go to zero in 2010 and then jump all the way back up to 55 percent. Sen. Jon Kyl (R., Ariz.) is trying to work out a compromise that permanently lowers the tax rate and raises the exemption level. (We think the more important of the two goals is to bring the rate down.) A permanent settlement would make estate planning a lot easier. Otherwise, people with estates should steer clear of their heirs in 2010.

■ The federal government instituted a tax on long-distance phone calls to pay for the Spanish-American War. Now the Treasury Department has agreed to stop collecting the tax, only 108 years later. Better late than never.

■ We think that the Supreme Court got it wrong when it ruled that the First Amendment protects flag burning. Setting fire to a flag is no more speech than nude dancing is. (How would you refute either "utterance"?) But there is no epidemic of burned flags, and it is reasonable to ask whether it is necessary to amend the Constitution to prohibit flag desecration. We would have preferred for Congress to pass a statute removing flag cases from the federal courts' jurisdiction, thus leaving states free to legislate on the subject. But a constitutional amendment has nearly enough votes to pass, and there is a case for it: namely, that it would vindicate the proposition that we are a self-governing nation.

■ California voters delivered a well-deserved defeat to Proposition 82, a ballot referendum that would have created a multibillion-dollar program for universal preschool in the state. What was expected to be a close call turned out to be

a landslide, with support for the measure barely topping 39 percent at the polls. How heartening that, in a state so blue, voters were able to see through the proposal's empty promises. Like so many other big-government initiatives, it was a monstrosity of statism and wasteful spending wrapped in a paper-thin layer of earnest idealism. In the ceaseless battle between the soothing of liberal consciences and the making of responsible policy choices, the right side carried this day.

■ Shortly after Canadian authorities arrested a dozen men plus five juveniles in an alleged terrorism plot, an official with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police said that the accused hailed from "the broad strata of our society." What he meant was that some of them had jobs and others didn't, and that some were students and others weren't. What a diverse bunch! That each and every one of them appears to be a Muslim radical was apparently less consequential. Indeed, many reporters tiptoed around this central element of the story: Reuters called them "a group of Canadian residents," as if they were hockey fans from Edmonton, and the *New York Times* called them "mainly of South Asian descent," as if their parents were doctors from India. There seemed to be a great reluctance to use words such as "Islam" and "jihad." The War on Terror is difficult in large part because the enemy operates in the shadows. But he is not unknown, and he has a name that we should dare to speak.

■ The Department of Homeland Security announced allocations for the Urban Areas Security Initiative—a grant program Congress designed in 2003 to fund terrorism prevention in high-threat, high-risk areas. The DHS cut funding for New York and Washington by 40 percent each, while increasing it for Louisville and Omaha by a similar amount. When the program was established, only seven high-risk cities were eligible for these funds. Thanks to political pressure from cities that felt unfairly left out, the program's scope has grown to cover an astonishing 95 cities of 100,000 people or more. The program's funding has not matched this rate of growth, and with more cities competing for fewer resources, it was to be expected that at some point risk would take a backseat to political expediency. Congress should shrink the scope of this program back down to its original size, and focus federal resources on the urban areas that need them most.

■ News that three Guantanamo Bay detainees had hanged themselves quickly became propaganda. "It was the inevitable result of creating a netherworld of despair beyond the laws of civilized nations," thundered a *New York Times* editorial. The *Times* is qualified to pronounce on the inmates' mental state . . . how? Maybe the suicides succumbed to despair. Maybe they pulled off a stunt to embarrass the United States. We don't know. Whatever the answer, it doesn't prove that practices at Guantanamo are unjustified any more than suicides in regular U.S. prisons prove that practices there are unjustified. The Left's compassion is never more exhibitionistic than when used as a club to beat the Bush administration.

■ When an FBI bribery investigation turned up \$90,000 in cash stashed in Rep. William Jefferson's freezer, he became

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the rightful target of a storm of bipartisan anger. Even House minority leader (and fellow Democrat) Nancy Pelosi demanded that he resign from his powerful position on the House Ways & Means Committee. Almost immediately, however, the Congressional Black Caucus began a strange parade of indignation in his defense. Faced with a fellow congressman caught in the act of defiling his office and disgracing his country, they cranked up the volume on something that should not have been relevant: Jefferson's race. Melvin Watt, the chairman of the Black Caucus, wondered to reporters why a "black member of Congress" was being singled out for such harsh treatment. The implication was that Nancy Pelosi is latently racist—that she wouldn't be making such a fuss if the \$90,000 in bribes had been found frozen crisply in the kitchen of a white congressman. Because, you know, Democrats these days would never attack a white guy.

■ Five years ago, a *Washington Post* poll asked whether race should be a factor in congressional redistricting "in order to elect more minorities to public office." An overwhelming majority of Americans said no, including 90 percent of whites, 83 percent of Hispanics, and 70 percent of blacks. But now Congress is pressing ahead with a bill that would make color-coded redistricting and foreign-language ballots a reality for at least another 25 years. In a grandly titled piece of legislation called the Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, and Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006, Congress would pretend that the Deep South of the 1960s still exists in the 21st century and extend the "emergency" provisions of the Voting Rights Act until 2032. In May, a House committee approved the bill by a vote of 33–1; the single courageous holdout was Rep. Steve King, a Republican of Iowa,

The American Colossus, In Perspective

ONE of the problems with economics is that the numbers involved are just too big. A trillion here, a billion there, who can keep track of it all? U.S. nominal GDP was about \$13 trillion in the first quarter of this year. Corporate profits were about \$1.6 trillion. The mind freezes just trying to think about such numbers.

Because of that, news reports tend to focus on the changes. Real GDP grew 5.3 percent in the first quarter. That's the kind of number that one can easily digest. But the levels contain enormously important meaning. If one wants to put the U.S. place in history and geopolitics in perspective, then one must start by understanding the significance of our economic scale. If the global economic competition were a basketball game, then the U.S. would be Shaquille O'Neal, and all of the other players would be dwarves.

The accompanying chart illustrates the point. The United States is a giant. Its GDP is roughly comparable to that of Japan, Germany, the U.K., and France combined. But the really striking thing is that the U.S. is so prosperous and productive that many of its cities have larger economies than whole countries.

In 2005, for instance, the New York metropolitan area alone out-produced all but eight countries. Russia, on an economic roll because of its massive oil wealth, has a much smaller economy than New York.

Los Angeles topped both Belgium and the Netherlands. The annual production of our nation's capital was almost identical to that of Poland. The Iranians are certainly causing political problems for the West. Their nuclear development has tied our diplomats in knots. Their threats move oil prices. In terms of purchasing power, however, they are Lilliputians. Even with all of their oil wealth, the Iranians have about the same size economy as Detroit. And Iran is relatively wealthy in its part of the world. Pakistan has about the same economic heft as Cleveland. If you could convince someone to give you the economy of Milwaukee in exchange for that of Kuwait, you would come out

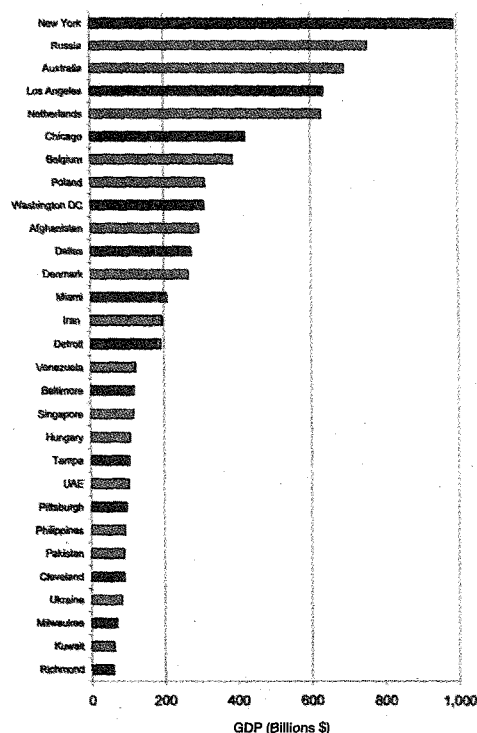
ahead (and have a beer to toast your good fortune).

Given these numbers, it's odd that Americans would be, as sentiment indicators imply they are, so down in the dumps. Economic growth has been good, but the economic levels are stunning.

And why are they so good? Compounding is, as Einstein mused, the most powerful force in the universe. The U.S. is so wealthy because we saw the benefits of free markets long before most others. The result has been two centuries of almost uninterrupted growth. Inching ever upward while others stagnated, we are the earth's colossus.

—KEVIN A. HASSETT

COUNTRY AND U.S. METROPOLITAN-AREA GDP (2005)

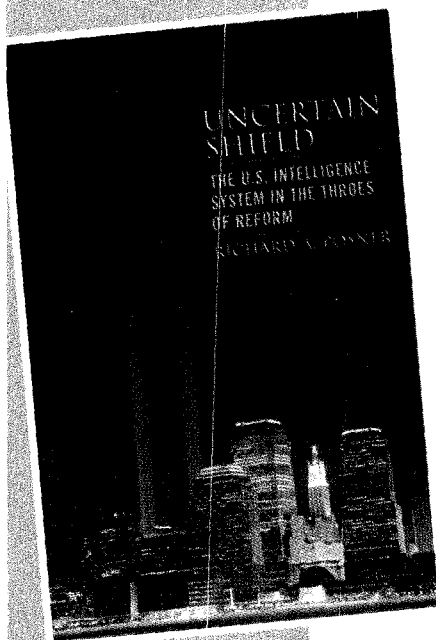


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Reforming Intelligence: Continuing the Debate



"Posner's continued study of reforms in our Intelligence structure since 9/11 is illuminating and constructive. Uncertain Shield makes a major contribution to the debate over how best to ensure America's security."—Henry A. Kissinger

In *Uncertain Shield: The U.S. Intelligence System in the Throes of Reform*, Richard Posner picks up where he left off in his latest book, *Preventing Surprise Attacks*, and continues to analyze domestic intelligence reform. He argues that the decisions the current administration has made in implementing the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 have created an intelligence system that is too top-heavy and centralized to be effective.

In this book, Posner

- Exposes fallacies in criticisms of the performance of the U.S. intelligence services
- Analyzes structures and priorities for directing and coordinating U.S. intelligence in the era of global terrorism
- Presents new evidence for the need to create a domestic intelligence agency separate from the FBI and a detailed blueprint for such an agency
- Exposes the inadequacy of the national security computer networks
- Examines critically Congress's performance in the intelligence field and raises constitutional issues concerning the respective powers of Congress and the president
- Emphasizes the importance of reforms that do not require questionable organizational changes

Richard A. Posner is a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals in Chicago and a senior lecturer at the University of Chicago Law School. He is the author of Remaking Domestic Intelligence.

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THE WEEK...

who is apparently one of the very few officeholders in Washington who believe that U.S. citizens should cast their votes on ballots written in English. The chief sponsor of the House bill is Rep. James Sensenbrenner, a Wisconsin Republican who is tough on immigration enforcement but votes weak on assimilation policy. When it comes to voting rights, Congress and the country would benefit from less talk, better substance, and greater awareness of what the public actually wants.

■ The House passed a new telecom bill after rejecting an amendment that would have given the FCC the power to enforce “net neutrality.” The amendment sought to regulate the market for high-speed broadband Internet access. A little history: After the FCC deregulated the broadband market last year, service providers such as AT&T and Verizon announced plans to build Internet “fast lanes” capable of delivering content at super-high speeds, for a higher price. Advocates of net neutrality—Internet companies like Amazon, Google and Yahoo—realize that they would need to pay for this fast-lane service to remain competitive. But because they are already dominant brands, they don’t want to. This is not a compelling reason to impose stasis on the development of the Internet. We hope the Senate will keep this in mind as they begin to debate this issue.

■ The Senate voted against a constitutional amendment to define marriage as the union of a man and a woman. Sen. John McCain justified his “no” vote by saying that he did not see any imminent threat that federal judges would impose same-sex marriage on the country, and that voters in the states could remedy any overreaching by state judges. Sen. Judd Gregg, who had backed the amendment previously, said that he no longer worried that the activism of the Massachusetts high court would spill over state borders. As the cause of same-sex marriage advances in the courts, more senators might come to see the urgency of enacting an amendment. We hope that it will not be too late by then.

■ Hawaii will remain intact for now, despite the best efforts of Sen. Daniel Akaka. After a contentious debate over his bill—which would have established a sovereign government entity for “native Hawaiians”—he and his supporters came up four votes short of the 60 required to proceed. Opponents emphasized that the new entity would be strictly racial in nature, and would undermine the fundamental American belief in *E Pluribus Unum*. The Bush administration echoed these criticisms in a letter condemning the bill. Proponents responded with little more than hollow platitudes about healing the wounds America has supposedly inflicted on Hawaiians. It is a sign of the times that spurious charges of racism and imperialism can prompt legislative action, but we can take comfort knowing that there are still lawmakers with the will to resist grievance peddlers. Let us hope we have seen the last of the Akaka bill.

■ The Supreme Court announced that it will hear a pair of cases involving racial preferences in its next term—the most important such cases since its ruling on the University of Michigan’s admissions system declared “racial diversity” a compelling interest justifying discrimination. There are two potentially significant differences this time: First, the cases involve K–12 education; second, the makeup of the Supreme Court has changed (most significantly because of the departure of wobbly Sandra Day O’Connor and her replacement by Samuel Alito). Interestingly, the lower courts in these cases both accepted race-based plans to assign students to schools, so there’s no conflict between circuit courts to clear up. And the justices tend not to hear cases that they wish merely to affirm. But nothing can be taken for granted. The Bush administration should commit itself to stopping the hard bigotry of racial bean-counting by submitting amicus briefs that correct its shameful capitulation in the Michigan cases.

■ Six years ago, we told President-elect Bush that majority whip Tom DeLay was his “most valuable asset in Congress.” DeLay has been a valuable asset to conservatives all through his remarkable 22-year congressional career, which ended in a farewell speech on the House floor. Since being elected by his Houston district, DeLay has been a rare political figure—combining strong principles with a gift for organization and tactics. After the 1994 Republican takeover of the House, he provided both anchor and sails for the GOP caucus. During his eight years as majority whip, Republicans never numbered more than 230 and were once as few as 221, yet time and again DeLay was able to put together the 218 votes needed for victory. Frustrated Democrats paid tribute to this success by making him the chief target of their attacks. In a final act of loyalty, DeLay resigned his seat rather than risk losing the majority he had been so instrumental in creating and so dedicated to serving. He will be sorely missed.



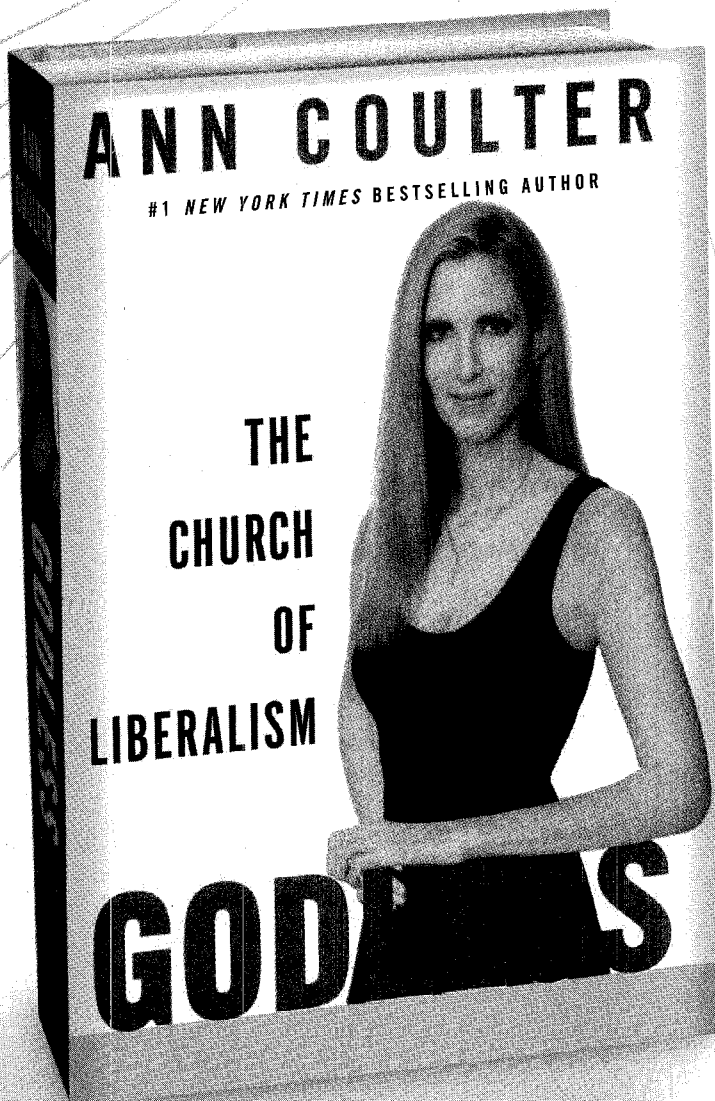
■ Harvard is going to get into the field of human cloning: creating human embryos for the purpose of stem-cell research that will kill them. News coverage of Harvard’s announcement has included the usual obfuscation. Some reporters have avoided the word “cloning” in favor of the phrase “somatic cell nuclear transfer,” and others have left it unclear that human embryos will be created by this transfer and killed afterward. Because some kinds of stem-cell research on human embryos poll well, Republicans have been wary of taking on any stem-cell research. But the public is still against cloning, and still against the deliberate creation of human embryos for research purposes, when the act is described in either of those ways. An industry in human cloning may develop in this country, but there is no good reason to be resigned to that outcome.

■ Mark Malloch Brown, a Briton who serves as Kofi

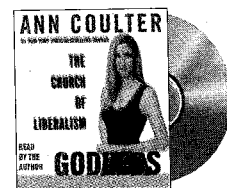
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ANN COULTER

**On the seventh day
God rested—and
liberals schemed**



In the gospel according to Ann, liberalism is finally exposed for what it is—a godless religion with its own churches (government schools, where prayer is banned but condoms are free), its own commandments (“Thou shalt not punish the perp”), its own holy writ (*Roe v. Wade*), and its own creation myth (Darwinian evolution). But now Ann Coulter is fighting back. *Heaven help them.*



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THE WEEK...

Annan's deputy at the U.N., lashed out at the United States in a move even the *New York Times* called "highly unusual." Malloch Brown attacked the Bush administration's policy of linking dues payment to management reforms at the U.N., as well as its perceived tolerance for critics of Turtle Bay (here he singled out Rush Limbaugh and Fox News). But a little over a year ago, when asked whether he thought Fox News was waging a political campaign against the U.N., Malloch Brown replied, "What Fox News and many others have said, which was that there were failings in [the Oil for Food] program, is correct." We watch the U.N. closely—but, unlike Mr. Malloch Brown, we somehow overlooked the moment when it attained infallibility.

■ Why would the U.S. back the offer of a light-water nuclear reactor to a country on its list of terror sponsors? The answer most charitable to the Bush administration is that the proposed reactor deal—one of many incentives that Europe, with U.S. blessing, has extended to Iran—will make it impossible for the mullahs to pretend their intentions are peaceful should they refuse. And American willingness to join negotiations with Iran if it suspends uranium enrichment might be necessary to win Security Council backing of eventual punitive action. But in the meantime, we are trading something for nothing. Even if negotiations never happen, our offer to talk with the mullahs allows Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to claim that the West has bowed to the will of the "Iranian nation." We have given the mullahs time to delay. We have strengthened their hand against Iranian democrats by conceding, in principle, that they can be treated as legitimate state actors. What reason is there to believe that their regime—whose strategic aim has always been to export Islamic revolution; whose modus operandi has always been terror—can now be tamed? If there is a good answer, we have yet to hear it.

■ A policeman's lot is not a happy one, according to Gilbert & Sullivan, and the blunders of the British forces in the effort to contain terrorism are proving the point over and over

WE GET ZARQAWI

*There's no joy at MoveOn.org,
Nor does Pelosi whoop
Like Salome at Abu's head—
Although she tries. The poop
From Hillary and honeybunch
Is muted. Murtha's still
For bugging out. A cranky press
Sullenly views the kill.*

—W. H. VON DREELE



again. The police had advance information about the London underground bombers who killed 52 people and wounded 700, but chose to ignore it. Then they misidentified a Brazilian electrician as a would-be terrorist, chased the poor man, and shot him dead in full view of the public. Presumably acting on a tip, they next concluded that two Bangladeshi brothers in the East End of London were planning a chemical attack with a nerve agent, probably sarin. A squad of 250 men with automatic weapons and chemical suits carried out a dawn raid, in the course of which one of the brothers was shot, fortunately not fatally. The intelligence proved false, perhaps planted by someone with a personal grudge. Nothing was found in the house. Freed without a charge, the brothers are in line to receive compensation far greater than anything they were likely to earn in a lifetime. The British police are certainly starring in comic opera, except that it's not comic.

■ In the category of stories that rumble away in the background of the news while rarely making it to our front pages, let us not forget the ongoing immiseration of Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe. There is indeed, as Adam Smith remarked, a great deal of ruin in a nation; but there is not so much that an ingenious leader bent on ruination cannot, even in the absence of such horrors as civil war or invasion, turn an orderly and prosperous country into a hellhole of violence and beggary. That has been Robert Mugabe's achievement. He is the first nation-wrecker of the 21st century. There is no real news from Zimbabwe other than its continuing descent into darkness. The nation's inflation rate for May 2006 was reported as 1,193 percent, up 150 percent from April's. Zimbabwe now prints \$100,000 bills, one of which will get you a loaf of bread, supposing you can find a vendor. That Mugabe is still received in foreign capitals—he is to present a paper on "land reclamation" in Accra, Ghana, in coming days—is an international scandal. Shall we be hearing condemnations of Mugabe from the U.N.'s spiffy new Human Rights Council? Don't bet on it.

■ Islamic militants have driven U.S.-backed warlords out of Mogadishu and may be poised to turn Somalia into a Taliban-style state. It would be hard to overstate how bad this is. At least for now, the militants disclaim ties to al-Qaeda, but these disclaimers are unconvincing, given al-Qaeda's history in Somalia. This history includes battling American forces and providing support for terrorists involved in both the 1998 attacks on U.S. embassies and the operations against Israeli targets in Kenya. The militants' victory is a chance for al-Qaeda to reestablish a stable base of operations—something it enjoyed in Sudan and Afghanistan during the years when it was most effective, and the subsequent absence of which has helped prevent terrorist attacks. Nor should we lose sight of the role of sharia courts in Somalia's unrest. It is around the authority of Islamic law that jihadists rally. This should be borne in mind as we attempt to build democracy in Iraq—and in Afghanistan, where we have helped secure the continuing influence of sharia.

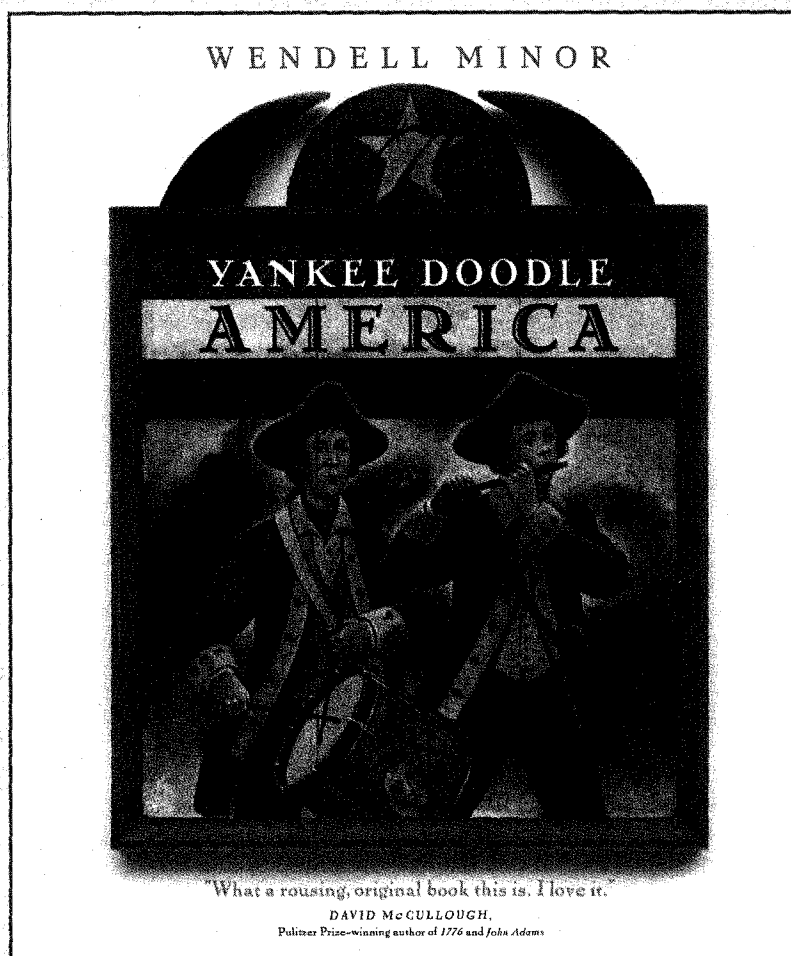
■ Speaking of which, one of the Somalian militants in ques-

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hardly be overstated." — David McCullough



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— *Publishers Weekly*, starred review

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THE WEEK...

tion, Sheikh Sharif Ahmed, insisted, "We do not want to impose sharia law. We will accept the views of the Somali people." That would seem not to include the people in Mogadishu who were trying to watch the World Cup in local cinemas, only to be dispersed by gunfire and have the electricity cut off. An official explained that watching soccer corrupts children. We have long suspected as much.

■ The case for constitutional monarchy has rarely been better illustrated than by King Bhumipol of Thailand, who celebrated the 60th anniversary of his accession on June 9. Intelligent and well-educated, of an old royal line—his great-grandfather was King Mongkut, made familiar to us, though controversially to Thais, by Yul Brynner in *The King and I*—Bhumipol has played his role perfectly, keeping his nation's chaotic politics at arm's length, tirelessly visiting every remotest corner of his kingdom, initiating countless apolitical projects for the relief, education, and health of Thailand's numerous poor, and serving, with his equally admirable (and very beautiful) wife Queen Sirikit, as an exemplar of domestic virtue and modest piety. Revered by his people, this monarch is too little known in the world at large. Though small-"r" republicans ourselves, we do not gainsay the constitutional arrangements of other nations. For 60 years Thailand has been blessed with a king worthy of the title. We offer him our congratulations, and hearty wishes for many more years of beneficent rule.

■ The Authority for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice is not something out of a farce, it is Saudi Arabia's official morality police force. Reuters recently reported that the Authority for the P. of V. and P. of V. is conducting a witch hunt. No, that's not a metaphor. The morality squads aren't just looking for scapegoats in some scandal, or mercilessly hounding unpopular persons. This is an actual *witch hunt*. Belief in witches is apparently widespread in Saudi Arabia. The practice of witchcraft is forbidden by Islam, however, and punishment, though we have no details, seems to be drastic. The head morality cop told a Saudi newspaper that "sorcerers and charlatans," when identified, must be "terminated." We in the West should not be too smug. We all know about the Salem trials of 1692; and one of the first bestsellers in the age of printed books was Kramer and Sprenger's *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486), a treatise on witchcraft. General anxiety about witches faded away 300 years ago in Christian civilization, though. Let us hope that 300 years from now the Saudis, too, will no longer live in fear of eccentric old ladies.

■ The Duke lacrosse scandal is trailing off into a whimper. The team's season was canceled after a stripper hired to perform at an off-campus party accused three players of rape, and D.A. Michael Nifong, in the midst of a heated campaign, quickly said the alleged assailants were undoubtedly guilty. For those interested in the triumvirate

of race, class, and gender, the story was a perfect storm: white, privileged Duke jocks assaulting a poor black woman. Only that does not seem to be the full story. DNA evidence proved nothing, and Duke's administration has issued an evenhanded report on the team, noting their exemplary record in matters of character and academics. Defense attorneys have produced more and more exculpatory evidence: time-stamped photographs, contradictory statements from the other stripper at the party, etc. Meanwhile, Nifong has gone silent. The sense that he has perpetrated a gross miscarriage of justice grows.

■ The concept of a humanoid mechanical robot, which has been around in one form or another since the 16th-century "Golem" tales, may finally be approaching realization. The very difficult problem of walking has recently been cracked. At a simpler level, over 2 million "Roomba" robot vacuum cleaners have already been sold. The Roomba illustrates the probable near future of robot development: not toward a general-purpose replacement for human beings, but designed with limited capabilities for specific functions. Sex, for example. Dr. Henrik Christensen, a high-level roboticist in Stockholm, predicts that people will be enjoying sexual congress with robots in five years or so. To quote the good doctor, "People are willing to have sex with inflatable dolls, so initially anything that moves will be an improvement." We leave readers to add their own observations, informed by their own experiences. The abolition of man, indeed—though preceded, we would guess, by the abolition of woman.

■ Along with Rocky and the Liberty Bell, Philadelphia is famous for cheesesteaks—fried steak, sliced or chopped, garnished with cheese and fried onions, served in a long roll. Mr. Joseph Vento runs one of the best-known cheesesteak restaurants in the city, and he is fed up with customers who can't speak English. He has accordingly posted signs around his establishment saying, "This is America: When ordering speak English." Mr. Vento's Sicilian grandparents struggled to learn English, and so should current immigrants, says he. It's a noble and patriotic effort, but we can already hear the ACLU and Office of Civil Rights lawyering up. Best go to Philly and get your cheesesteak and freedom fries while Mr. Vento is still at large.

■ Music, Congreve told us, has charms to soothe the savage breast. The municipal authorities in Sydney, Australia, are betting on the truth of this as a way to solve some of their problems with hooliganism. Gathering in streets and parking lots, revving up their hot rods, the oafs have been discouraging patrons of local stores and restaurants. In hopes of driving them away, or at least soothing their savage breasts, officials in the Rockdale district of Sydney will play Barry Manilow music, interspersed with some classical selections, through loudspeakers at the affected sites. Mr. Manilow was apparently selected as being the least cool musician of our times. The terrifying possibility that Sydney's public places might soon be thronged with legions of baby-boomer housewives singing along with Barry seems not to have occurred to anyone.

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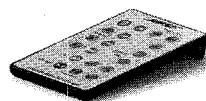
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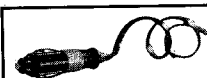
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THE WEEK...

■ Every year, News Corporation—Rupert Murdoch's company—hands out the Eric Breindel Award for Excellence in Opinion Journalism. It is given to one who demonstrates "love of country and its democratic institutions" and who "bears witness to the evils of totalitarianism." This year, the winner is Mark Steyn—than whom no one could be more deserving.

AT WAR

Death of a Monster

ON one banner day, news came that a U.S. air strike had killed Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, and that Iraqis had agreed on consensus choices to head the defense and interior ministries. Supporters of the war are constantly looking for signs of a strategic turning point in Iraq, and some discern one in these events. Perhaps. In any event, the developments definitely provide an opening for President Bush to redouble our efforts before Iraq slides further into chaos, and before declining American popular support forecloses spending more blood or treasure there.

Zarqawi's death is particularly welcome because it comes at such a distressing time in Iraq. According to the Pentagon's report to Congress on Iraqi stability and security, attacks between February and May of this year were higher than in any comparable period over the last two years. Total casualties, including both Iraqis and Americans, are up. In March 2006, car bombs were at their highest level since October 2005. Sectarian violence is up since the attack on the Golden Mosque in February. All of this makes for a deteriorating security picture, while at the same time oil production and electricity generation are flat.

This is why, prior to the latest news, some hawks inside and outside the administration were beginning privately to use the D-word, defeat. That would be a strategic catastrophe for the United States and a political calamity for the Bush administration. Oddly, the U.S. government has not been giving the war a 100 percent effort, even though Bush shows every indication of understanding the stakes in Iraq. To take one example, which military writer Thomas X. Hammes pointed out the other day, the administration has long talked of creating 16 provincial reconstruction teams in Iraq—specialists in all the important areas of civil affairs who would assist Iraqis at the regional level. Such teams have been a success in Afghanistan, but only four have been created in Iraq.

When it comes to U.S. military strategy, it is not always clear whether the first priority is "clear, sweep, and hold"—i.e., sweeping insurgents out of a given area, then leaving enough American or Iraqi forces that they don't come back—or simply getting American troops off the streets and back into their bases. Sometimes the Bush administration gives the impression that, in light of the unpopularity of the war at the moment, it wants to tiptoe in Iraq, doing a bare minimum that might secure victory if everything breaks the right way. This may seem to minimize

political risk, but it actually increases it. If things *don't* break the right way—and they often don't—it means courting defeat. And there is no unobtrusive, politically painless way to lose a war. People will notice.

The killing of Zarqawi and the completion of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's government are a fortunate confluence that allows a new departure in Iraq, as Bush officials fully realize and the president's trip to Baghdad dramatized. The White House believes—correctly, in our view—that the portion of the American public that is persuadable on Iraq will listen to a message based on the argument that loss in Iraq would bring dire consequences, and that the U.S. is constantly adjusting to conditions rather than mindlessly "staying the course." A redoubling of effort now could be sold in these terms, and it would be natural to couple it with the completion of Maliki's government.

In a new departure, it should become obvious that the rest of the U.S. government cares as much about success in Iraq as whichever 130,000 American troops happen to be there at any time. Gen. Barry McCaffrey's latest memo on Iraq, following a fact-finding trip there, contains a devastating critique of this lack of focus. "The bottom line," he writes, "is that only the CIA and the U.S. Armed Forces are at war." Among other things, more resources and personnel should be poured into an attempt to establish in Iraq something like the intelligence superiority that Israelis enjoy in the West Bank, and into accelerating the training and equipping of Iraqi security forces.

Most important, we should work with Maliki on his plan to secure Baghdad, the linchpin of Iraq, and be willing to face the fact that he probably doesn't have the forces to do it on his own. The training of the Iraqi army has been a success story, but the police—so important in any counterinsurgency—are a disaster. They routinely torture and murder, and, at the moment, are part of the problem. If Maliki, in these conditions, says he really needs, say, another 20,000 U.S. troops to finally secure Baghdad, Bush shouldn't hesitate.

This would bring howls and comparisons to the escalation in Vietnam. But we suspect the public would be willing to swallow it, if such an increase in troops levels were persuasively linked to a plan for victory. The comparisons to Vietnam are more aptly made about the status quo, which has featured steadily ebbing domestic support and a decaying situation on the ground. In sheer political terms, Bush is probably better off taking action—even what seems a risky action in an election year—than "staying the course" with the same old resolute, reassuring talk.

It is true, as we have often said, that the Iraqi political process is crucial to victory. But it is a necessary, not sufficient, condition for success. The mainstream-Sunni embrace of legitimate Iraqi politics should eventually drain the insurgency of some of its power, but the timeline could be long. With his attempted crack-down in militia-infested Basra and his release of low-level Sunni detainees from prison, Maliki appears to have the right idea—pursuing reconciliation with the Sunnis while getting a handle on the security situation. But if he has the will to exert his control, he might not have the means, and that is where we could still have a decisive influence.

To paraphrase Emerson, events have too often been in the saddle in Iraq lately. We should work to change that while we still can. The killing of Zarqawi was one important victory; now we must do what's necessary to create more of them.

notes & asides

■ *Remarks by WFB at the memorial service for John Kenneth Galbraith, May 31, 2006*

Mrs. Galbraith, ladies and gentlemen:

There was usually mischief there, or so it was with me. He had a fine poker face, and you would not know for sure from the study of it that he was engaged in teasing, a cherished mode. "Now sit down and listen. I think I told you this before, but you didn't listen. Not listening to me is a highly developed skill of yours.

"You have a great opportunity. You must denounce the Iraq War. Your credentials as a conservative will soar and your influence will be critical. I'm seldom wrong in these matters—

"When was I wrong, you ask?" Pause. "When I predicted George McGovern would be elected? I wasn't wrong. The voters were wrong. —Kitty? Kitty!" He lifts his finger and points it at me. "He pretends he can't hear me. He can hear me perfectly well."

It was very hard, those last few years, yet he spoke always those complete sentences. He said about himself once or twice that the reason his prose was so perfect was that he rewrote everything five times, injecting levity into the fourth draft. But his spoken sentences were syntactically pure, though his enunciation was interrupted by what the speech teachers single out as a "vocalized pause." In 1972 I passed through Hong Kong on a duty run for the USIA. I was introduced to a press clerk whose job it was to send out material through USIA wires—editorials from prominent newspapers, recorded speeches given by public figures. Past the routine briefing, the young man confessed that he had amused himself the week before by editing a recent speech by Professor Galbraith in which the USIA technician had eliminated almost all of the text, leaving in only what amounted to a long string of vocalized pauses, now connected with only three or four words of Galbraith at intervals.

Would I like to hear it? It's only five minutes, he said.

I got away with a copy of that tape, and at a dinner party in Gstaad advised the company that I would play for them the most recent speech by Professor Galbraith.

I thought it quite wonderful. My wife noisily disagreed. Kitty twinkled, but then she always twinkles.

A few years later, while recording for PBS in 13 episodes his paean to statist interventions in human life, Ken told me that he was startled to learn, at the great age of 70, how frequently he had had to repeat his lines in order to avoid the vocalized pause. One afternoon in Vermont he talked this matter over with Milton Friedman, who had done 13 episodes of his own show on the freedom to choose.

Friedman, like Galbraith a former president of the American Economic Association, had invited the Galbraiths to his house in Vermont for lunch. When the subject of the tapings came up, Friedman said that he had simply refused when the engineers asked him to repeat the text more than once.

There was a reason for that, Ken explained to me on the drive home. "Milton is more trenchant than I am, but he isn't as subtle." I was at the wheel for the return drive, Kitty and my wife in the back seat. We drove slowly because Ken was very solicitous for his beautiful new car, a Saab with lovely, simple lines, inside and outside. I had risen early that morning and assembled from a local store a menagerie of kiddy-zoo pieces—a teddy bear on a suction cup, parrots that sang out—converting his beautiful new Saab into the most lurid passage from his *Affluent Society*. But all that stuff was easily removed after he saw it, and we drove in his repristinated car to visit the Friedmans.

I asked whether he thought of bringing his car to Switzerland for the winter, or did he plan simply to use my car, as was his habit. He was in Gstaad

every winter during that period. I mentioned this when, in 1972, we were pitted against each other at a huge affair for the benefit of the New York Public Library, he advancing the candidacy of George McGovern, I that of Richard Nixon. The master of ceremonies was Art Buchwald. It was a week or two after Senator McGovern had dismissed vice-presidential nominee Thomas Eagleton. "*The important question before the house*," Buchwald began thunderously, evoking a public reaction to incumbent vice president Spiro Agnew, "*is: Are we better off with a vice president who has been treated for mental illness or with one who hasn't?*"

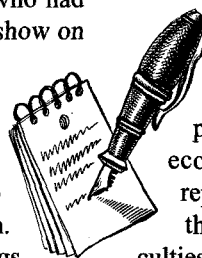
Professor Galbraith was vivid that evening in berating me and my politics, and in turn I explained to the audience that during the winter Mr. Galbraith pursued the study of skiing and economics. "His ski teachers," I reported, "are cheered by the news that Mr. Galbraith also has difficulties in mastering his other line of activity." I started to say his "sedentary activity," but I wasn't sure that would successfully distinguish it from his activity as a skier. I add most belatedly that George McGovern is the only American who ran for president and actually called on the telephone last year to greet me on my 80th birthday.

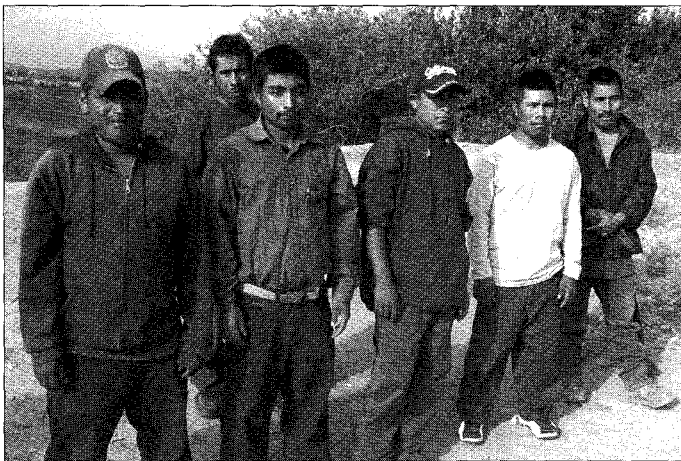
A couple of years ago I wrote to Alan Galbraith after a discouraging visit and told him I would not be traveling again to Cambridge; the last experience of trying to penetrate his father's deafness had been too painful. He replied that he understood well the problem, and asked merely that I stay in touch with his father.

But soon I resumed the trips, because they meant so much to me, to sit by the bedside of this eminent man, who loved so the language in which he wrote and spoke, and reveled in the wit he brought to life itself.

I thank Kitty for the joy she gave him, and the pleasure she has given to us.

—WFB





■ PUBLIC POLICY ■

Back to the Future

If Mexicans in America fail to assimilate,
we could see the return of something ugly

DAVID FRUM

MEXICAN immigrants like it in America. They are much more likely than other immigrants to rate life in the United States as superior to life in the country where they were born, according to survey research by Public Agenda in 2003. They come to work: They are much less likely than other immigrants to cite political freedom as the reason for their migration. They show near zero interest in radical politics: Aside from a few loony college professors, the mystic cause of reuniting the southwestern United States to Mexico seems to excite almost nobody. They crossed the desert to escape Mexico, not to rejoin it. Whatever is going on, it isn't a Reconquista.

So . . . good news, right? Assimilation is working? Not exactly. Mexican immigrants may like America, but they are having serious trouble joining it. Well into the second and third generations after arrival, they remain much poorer than other Amer-

icans—with unsettling long-term political and economic consequences for the United States.

Only 7 percent of Mexican immigrants arrive in the United States able to speak English. Few possess much formal education. These deficiencies shunt them into low-wage sectors of the economy. The economist George Borjas calculates that Mexican Americans earn almost 40 percent less than American-born workers with American-born parents. Low wages hold Mexican Americans in poverty—and the evidence suggests that their families will remain poor into the second and third generations.

Lacking English and formal education themselves, Mexican-American immigrants do not seem to attach much importance to their children's acquiring either. While 82 percent of immigrants from Europe feel that all immigrants should be expected to learn English, and even 61 percent of non-Mexican Latinos agree, only a bare majority of Mexican immigrants, 54 percent, think English essential, again according to the Public Agenda survey. While 67 percent of non-Mexican immigrants think that public-school classes should be taught exclusively in English,

only 51 percent of Mexicans think so.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the children of these migrants do not flourish in school. A Manhattan Institute study of the high-school class of 1998 found that only 54 percent of Hispanic students graduated with their class, as compared with nearly 80 percent of their white counterparts. These dropouts may later return to school or earn a high-school equivalency certificate. But they will have difficulty catching up to their classmates who finished on time. And of course the children of high-school dropouts are more likely to drop out in their turn.

Borjas points out that the differences in earnings between U.S. immigrant groups and the native population persist from generation to generation. Experience would suggest that if Mexican immigrants earn 40 percent less than natives, their children will earn 20 percent less, their grandchildren 10 percent less, and so on. That's not a reassuring estimate, but the reality may well be even worse. The "experience" Borjas cites is that of immigrant families settling in the United States in the 1930s, '40s, and '50s: the golden age of blue-collar America. Even if they did not speak much English, even if they did not possess much formal education, they could find work in a factory or on a dock that paid better relative to other sectors of the economy, and offered higher inflation-adjusted wages, than the same jobs today. Post-1970 America has become a much tougher environment for those without higher education. In 1970, a 30-year-old man with a college degree earned a little more than twice as much as his counterpart with a high-school diploma. By 1990, he earned three times as much. Today, the disparity gapes wider still.

The Center for Immigration Studies has found considerable evidence that today's immigrants do considerably worse than previous immigrants, decades after arrival. In 1970, only 25.7 percent of immigrants who had lived in the U.S. for ten to twenty years were poor, compared with 35.1 percent of natives. By 2000, 41.4 percent of long-settled immigrants were poor, as compared with 28.8 percent of natives.

Behind all these numbers is an emerging social reality. The immigration policies of the past two decades have imported

DAVID BACON

Mr. Frum, a contributing editor of *NATIONAL REVIEW*, is the author of *The Right Man: The Surprise Presidency of George W. Bush* and (with Richard Perle) *An End to Evil: How to Win the War on Terror*.

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into the United States a large population that will remain ill educated, incompletely fluent in English, and significantly poorer than the rest of the country well into the 2030s and 2040s. And President Bush's proposal to settle this population permanently—and to increase the flow of new migrants—will make the problems bigger, deeper, and more intractable.

It's troubling to turn on the television and see thousands of illegal immigrants marching behind the Mexican flag, chanting slogans that denounce America's right to control its borders. But I'd worry a lot less about the Republic of Aztlán than about a future in which the American economy rests on a linguistically distinct subclass of ill-educated low-wage workers.

Imagine America in 2031. That's the not-so-distant future: It's a date as far ahead of us as Ronald Reagan's first inauguration is behind us. Suppose the Bush immigration plan of 2006 or something like it has been enacted. Illegal aliens have been legalized; family-reunification and guest-worker programs continue to bring millions of Mexicans and Central Americans north.

In 2031, daily life for you and your children (if I may make a demographic assumption about you, reader) probably proceeds more or less as it does today. The roads are more crowded, real estate and gasoline probably more expensive, taxes higher, and government services worse. On the other hand, many onetime luxuries have steadily declined in price. Domestic-cleaning services like Merry Maids have proliferated, as have in-home childcare and eldercare, gardening services, prepared-meal services, and car detailing. Like Alicia Silverstone in *Chueless*, you have little need to know how to parallel park—everywhere you want to go, they have valet. In short: The southern-California lifestyle has spread throughout the country.

But what of the migrants whose labor sustains your pleasantly seigniorial life?

How do they feel about their relative poverty—a poverty cushioned but not significantly ameliorated by the food stamps, Earned Income Tax Credits, housing subsidies, and Medicaid benefits for which they are now eligible? At first, perhaps, they didn't complain much. Life in the United States represented a huge improvement

over life in Mexico or Central America. First-generation migrants worked too hard, felt too insecure, and trusted government too little to agitate for a better deal. But what of their American-born but ill-educated and low-wage children?

They have the vote. They have expectations of a better life. Will they not find politicians ready to mobilize them for a new era of populist redistributionism—a redistributionism made more powerful and more exciting by the ethnic and linguistic differences between haves and have-nots?

Certainly that is the future left-wing Democrats expect. Immigration reformers often express wonder that the political Left has welcomed an immigration whose main effect is to lower the wages of less-skilled workers, especially black men. But maybe the Left is playing a longer game here—where the short-term depression of living standards for working people becomes a necessary price to pay to reignite the radical economic movements that inflamed the United States from 1870 to 1940.

Americans have become so used to political and economic stability that they have forgotten that their country was once disgraced by the most violent and bloody labor conflicts on earth. These conflicts were often intensified by the ethnic differences between strikers and the American population at large—differences that exerted a follow-on effect in electoral politics. As Michael Barone observes in *Our Country*, his magisterial history of 20th-century American politics, outside the South the division between support for and opposition to Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal was grounded on ethnicity as much as social class, with old-stock Americans against and immigrants and the children of immigrants in favor.

Politicians like Los Angeles mayor Antonio Villaraigosa plainly hope that the trick can be repeated in this new century. As Harold Meyerson wrote in *The American Prospect*, the "Latinoization [of California] has also transformed California's fiscal politics." The state that led the tax-rebellion movement in the late 1970s and fed the national conservative political resurgence passed "a massive \$9.2-billion school bond measure and a \$2-billion initiative for parks and open-space preservation" in 1998, and reduced the power of

anti-tax voters to veto local-government bond measures. "With the uptick in Latino voting . . . the gap between the voting public and the people who need public services began to narrow."

Many conservative immigration advocates insist that Villaraigosa and Meyerson have it wrong—that the migrants and their children and grandchildren will be socially conservative and politically quiescent. It's worth noting, though, that Republican political professionals are ceasing to believe this: That's why so many of them, from Karl Rove on down, now emphasize guest-worker programs as a way to benefit from immigrant labor without having to face the consequences of immigrant votes.

But as the French and Germans have discovered, there is nothing less temporary than a temporary worker. The migrants will settle, will take up their political rights—and will use those rights to advance their interests: interests that may sharply differ from those of more-established inhabitants.

For more than half a century, American society has been divided along lines of race. The most polarizing issues—busing, affirmative action, welfare, crime—have explicitly or implicitly involved race. Race has exerted so strong an influence that when new grievances came along—the rights of women, of the disabled, of gays—the grievance-bearers unself-consciously squeezed and shoved their demands into the forms left behind by the civil-rights battles of 30, 40, and 50 years before.

Race and race analogies so mesmerize us that we unthinkingly assume that the challenges presented by immigration must fit into this ancient envelope. It's almost impossible for us to imagine anything else—least of all something so antiquated, so remote as conflicts along the lines of class.

But everything old becomes new again. And it may well be that the greatest threat from today's immigration is not that the United States will be racially balkanized, but that it will relive a past in which classes invoked ethnic solidarity in a struggle over wealth and power. The danger is not that immigrants won't "Americanize." They will. The danger is that they will reintroduce America to an authentically American history that once seemed long and well forgotten.

NR

PSA COUNT UP? TOO MANY TRIPS TO THE BATHROOM?

Help lower your PSA naturally and get the rest your body needs

By Richard Huemer, M.D.

The U.S. Government has announced that they will be conducting the largest ever study on Cancer. The study will determine what are the long-term effects of Selenium and Vitamin E on the Prostate Gland and its potential for protection against Prostate Cancer.

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■ POLITICS

Viva Kos Vegas?

How the big lefty jamboree went down

BYRON YORK

ONE question kept popping up again and again at the YearlyKos convention, the gathering of devotees of the Left's biggest and most popular political website, DailyKos. The question was: How can we persuade people that we're not nuts? "How do you avoid being seen as just a bunch of crazy bloggers?" asked a woman at one of many panel discussions devoted to blogs and their role in left-wing politics. How do we erase "the stigma of the crazy leftist blogger"? asked another. And just for emphasis, a few participants made their own statements by walking around wearing crudely fashioned tinfoil hats.

It was a good joke, sort of. But what about the question? The blogosphere in general, and in this case the left-wing blogs, are known for angry, intemperate, sometimes conspiratorial musings. With DailyKos, there's a long list of such statements, many of them by founder and editor Markos Moulitsas, and others by the thousands of readers who visit the site each day. For example, when it turned out that the convention began on the same morning in which U.S. forces killed Iraq terror leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, one Kossack wrote, "I wonder if Zarqawi was trotted out to put a stop to media coverage of YearlyKos." "I wouldn't put

Mr. York is NR's White House correspondent, and the author of *The Vast Left Wing Conspiracy: The Untold Story of How Democratic Operatives, Eccentric Billionaires, Liberal Activists, and Assorted Celebrities Tried to Bring Down a President—and Why They'll Try Even Harder Next Time.*

it past 'em," answered another.

Maybe they were the ones in the hats. But the story of YearlyKos was not a rogue statement here and there, but the bigger picture of lefty bloggers wanting to be taken seriously. "We have arrived. Look at this conference," Moulitsas told the convention on its opening night. "There's no doubt we're turning the political world upside down."

Well, actually, there's a lot of doubt about that—Moulitsas and his followers have lent their support to more than a dozen Democratic candidates in the last couple of years, and none of them has won a general election. But there's no doubt that the lefty blogosphere has arrived for two key constituencies: Democratic politicians and the media.

YearlyKos attracted the heavyweights of national political coverage—reporters from the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, and other top publications. Some of them had paid little attention to the lefty blogs in the past, and their stories from Las Vegas stuck closely to the new conventional wisdom that blogs are now a Big Thing: "Gathering Highlights Power of the Blog" was the headline the *New York Times* gave it.

As far as Democratic pols were concerned, YearlyKos attracted Senate minority leader Harry Reid (House minority leader Nancy Pelosi was scheduled to come but was delayed because of a late

vote), Sen. Barbara Boxer, Democratic National Committee chairman Howard Dean, and would-be presidential candidates Mark Warner, Tom Vilsack, and Wesley Clark. They came to Las Vegas looking for potential voters, activists to resist Republican lawmakers in Washington, and campaign cash. But most of all, they came to pay tribute.

"You guys are the best," Dean told the crowd. "Every day you are changing America," said Boxer. "I know fighters when I see them," said Reid. "You're fighters. You're fighters for the truth."

Most of the tribute was in words, but Warner, the millionaire former governor of Virginia who was one of the first to commit to speak at the conference, went farther. "He put his credibility on the line to do this event when nobody else really wanted to," Moulitsas said. "He sent a message to the party that we are a force to be reckoned with, [that] maybe we weren't these far-left, extremist wackos that everybody else seems to think we are."

And Warner didn't just show up. He hosted "Blogosphere at the Stratosphere," a party held at a restaurant atop the Las Vegas landmark known as the Stratosphere, a 1,155-foot tower overlooking the casinos and hotels of the Strip. Warner had the most extensive materials for distribution in the conference hall. And when he spoke to the group at lunch on the last day, participants entered the room to find



Blogging in the halls at YearlyKos

JAE C. HONG/AP

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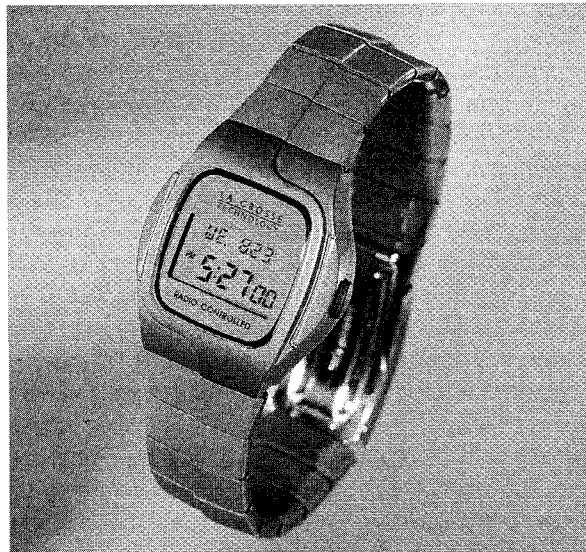
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each chair draped with a T-shirt labeled "YearlyKos Convention, June 8–11, 2006, Las Vegas" with a dramatic image of none other than Mark Warner. It was all courtesy of Forward Together, Warner's political action committee. Moulitsas described it all as a "first date" between the Kossacks and Warner. "Let's keep dating!" Warner told the crowd.

But the news from Warner's appearance was that the first date didn't go all that well, because the suitor seemed a bit overeager. Warner's party, convention-goers said, had been too lavish—it cost around \$50,000—which suggested to them that Warner was trying too hard and, even worse, might have been looking to buy their support. His speech to the gathering was unmemorable. And before speaking, he showed the crowd the sort of treacly, consultant-produced campaign video that leaves even un-cynical crowds untouched. After it was finished, Moulitsas told the audience, "Ladies and gentlemen, wipe those tears from your eyes and welcome Governor Mark Warner." It was Moulitsas's way of saying, Hmmm, we're not sure about this date.

And anyway, before the Kossacks can commit to another guy, they'll have to get over their love affair with their first boyfriend, Howard Dean. And that seems unlikely. They still speak fondly of Dean's race for the Democratic presidential nomination—"2003 was the year of Howard Dean," Moulitsas told the crowd, "where an unknown governor from a small, remote, and usually forgotten state was propelled to front-runner status on the strength of people power"—and try not to remember that Dean lost miserably. They're delighted that he is chairman of the DNC—and they're happy to take credit for getting him the job—but they want more. In fact, not far from where Dean spoke to the group, there was a booth that sold old "Dean for America" campaign T-shirts (\$20), bumper stickers (\$10), and buttons (\$5). Maybe they'll come in handy again someday.

But even Dean's appearance at the convention wasn't all roses. Sure, he paid tribute to the Kossacks, but at the same time he sent signals that he didn't completely understand who they are. On many occasions, Moulitsas has tried to dispel the image of left-wing bloggers as a bunch of kids tapping away on computers all the

time. "They say that we're politically naïve, that we're young," he told the Kossacks. But that's not true: "The average DailyKos reader is 45. We're not that young."

Unfortunately, somebody forgot to tell Dean, who praised the bloggers' supposedly youthful enthusiasm. You are a "new generation," Dean told members of the audience, which was filled with baby boomers and not a little gray hair. "This is the generation that takes the country back to the high ideals of Franklin Roosevelt and Jack Kennedy. You are the first generation who are citizens of the whole world, because of the Net." Perhaps the group should have been flattered—Why, you don't seem that old!—but they weren't.

In the end, the only leader who truly connected with the Kossacks was Moulitsas himself. His "keynote" address on the convention's opening night was, more than any other speech at YearlyKos, a perfect statement of the sense of anger, grievance, and frustration that motivates so many of his blogging followers. "Look at each other," Moulitsas said. "Look left and right. There have been so many efforts to marginalize us by the media and political elite because we had the temerity to feel passionate about politics. How dare us riff raff demand a voice in our democracy?"

But we're not going to take it anymore, Moulitsas told them. We're going to stop yelling at our television sets, stop complaining among ourselves, and we're going to crash the gates of power in Washington. And then, things will be great, just great. "People power is a wonderful thing," Moulitsas said. "Everyone can be a leader. Everyone can be a strong voice. Everyone can make a difference. There has been far too much talent, far too much passion, far too much intelligence in this country marginalized by the establishment currently stinking up Washington, D.C. And now, that talent has an outlet. It can no longer be marginalized."

To an outsider, Moulitsas's beautiful vision might seem a little, well, unrealistic, especially for a group that has shown an uncanny ability to pick political losers and alienate centrists in their own party. But at YearlyKos, the will to believe was strong. Whether the Kossacks can turn their faith into reality is another thing altogether.

NR

■ ESSAY

The Terms Of Debate

If you want to get anywhere, you have to show you're 'progressive'

JONAH GOLDBERG

EVER since the dawn of the Progressive Era, conservatives have been fighting progressive assumptions about the role of the state, the nature of justice, and the relevance, if any, of the transcendent to public life. With few exceptions, this argument has been almost entirely on the opposition's terms.

Consider, for example, the debate about same-sex marriage. Among those already convinced that same-sex marriage should be illegal, invocations of the Bible and natural law are common. But these arguments are useless when it comes to persuading the secular-minded. That's why Maggie Gallagher, Stanley Kurtz, and others consistently invoke not God's law but the laws of regression analysis and standard deviation ("deviation" in a strictly statistical sense, of course). These are useful arguments, and it's good that someone is making them. But the implied assumption seems to be that if numbers and charts demonstrated that same-sex marriages were better for kids than "traditional" ones, conservatives—or at least many of them—would throw in the towel.

Indeed, so steeped are we in progressive assumptions that "traditional" has become a category to be tested and prodded like any other. One can imagine some study with towers of numbers falling in neat columns. One of these appears under the heading "traditional" and stands alongside a dozen others. Whichever category scores the highest, wins.

This outlook gained currency on the right with the triumph of neoconservatism. As William F. Buckley Jr. noted long ago, the chief contribution of the neocons was their ability to argue in the

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language of the Left: social science. An ideologically diverse group, the neoconservatives nonetheless shared the view that politics and government were important tools for shaping and directing society. Their influence was acutely felt, though not widely recognized, in the 1990s. *The Weekly Standard* picked up the cause of “national greatness.” When Newt Gingrich took over the House, he declared the dawn of a new progressive era. Jack Kemp offered the word “progressive” to frightened liberals as if it meant “I come in peace.” Lamar Alexander put out a book whose title, *The New Promise of American Life*, paid homage to Herbert Croly’s odious opus. John McCain openly modeled himself on Teddy Roosevelt (the Progressive party nominee in 1912), and George W. Bush embraced Marvin Olasky’s “compassionate conservatism,” which promised to be—and later revealed itself to be—predicated on deep progressive foundations.

Why has this happened? The answer is that we live in a progressive world. If you live in Japan, you’ll be hard-pressed to persuade people of anything if you don’t speak Japanese or understand the culture. Similarly, conservatives must speak the language of progressivism in order to persuade progressives that they are wrong. The danger in this is that you can go native. John Blackthorne in James Clavell’s *Shogun* becomes more Japanese than many Japanese people. So, too, conservatives can end up more progressive than the progressives.

But what, exactly, do I mean by “progressivism”? Certainly not—or not merely—the tinfoil-hattery that gets called “progressive” on the web and elsewhere. Progressivism has overlapping meanings. It refers both to the generic leftism we associate with the word “progressive” and to the Progressive Era of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. But both of these senses rely on a more metaphysical meaning. Progressivism was perhaps best summarized by Condorcet’s declaration that there is “a science that can foresee the progress of humankind, direct it, and accelerate it.” Progressivism takes it as a given that mankind, not God, is the pilot of Spaceship Earth. The good is measured in material terms—greater health, greater prosperity, greater comfort—and the social sciences are the disciplines that

allow us to engineer society in ways that will maximize the good. Recall that the phrase “social engineering” didn’t start out as an epithet; people once bragged that they were social engineers. Even if the term has fallen into disrepute, the practice is alive and well.

Progressivism was an entirely rational response to the scientific method’s success at what Francis Bacon called “the relief of man’s estate.” Rather than beseeching God for bounty and good fortune and giving thanks when these were received, mankind learned to do for himself. Irrigation replaced rain. Animal husbandry and domestication brought more happiness and prosperity than praying for a good hunting season. Medicine substituted for crossing your fingers that the smallest cut wouldn’t lead to deadly infection. While one occasionally hears sophomoric voices—on the left and the right—opining about the superiority of medieval life or the rapture of living in a “state of nature” with one’s fellow noble savages, few of us are eager to defenestrate dentistry, cable TV, and air conditioning in exchange for such joy. And rightly so.

But there was a considerable downside to the displacement of the Almighty by the trinity of the slide rule, the microchip, and the test tube. Eric Voegelin was among the most alarmed critics of the rising progressive tide. According to Voegelin, you cannot eliminate the religious instinct. “When God is invisible behind the world, the contents of the world will become new gods; when the symbols of transcendent religiosity are banned, new symbols develop from the inner-worldly language of science to take their place.” Translation: When you rely on science and technology to do God’s job, it won’t be long before you worship science as a god. Marxism, the apotheosis of progressivism, purged the divine and replaced it with materialism. For the Marxist, proclaimed Voegelin, “Christ the Redeemer is replaced by the steam engine as the promise of the realm to come.” For many people today, the steam engine has been replaced by the embry-

onic stem cell as the promise of the realm to come.

Conservatives, or at least a majority of them, retain an admirable opposition to crossing bright lines on “life” issues. The passionate denunciations that this “dogmatism” elicits from liberals are a sign of how fundamental is the progressive faith that we are our own gods. The Left’s rancor also reflects the fact that protection of the unborn is one of the last redoubts of conservative adherence to immutable moral law. Pro-lifers often concede that having an unwanted baby is “bad” for both the baby and the mother in material terms (though it is of course not as bad for the baby as death). They simply say that a higher law applies.

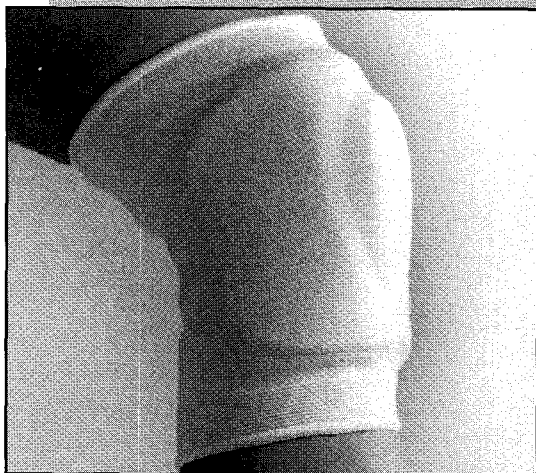
But very few conservatives would dream of making such an argument when it comes to, say, economics. They note that eliminating the “death tax” would be good for “growth,” or for minorities, or for entrepreneurialism. The cuts would pay for themselves, we are assured. But even when conservatives believe that the death tax is not only unwise

but unjust (as indeed it is), they recognize that this position simply won’t fly. Indeed, the supply-side school of economics was born of the progressive desire to prove that cutting taxes for the rich would be good for the poor. Why? Because conservatives either accepted or surrendered to the prevailing view that high taxes on the wealthy would be justified if they advanced the common good. As a matter of logic, this view offers no principled reason for the state not to confiscate *all* wealth if doing so would be beneficial to society (though there are of course *pragmatic* reasons to think it would not). As a matter of justice, it is no more legitimate to rob a man of nine of his apples for the “public interest” than to take all ten.

Many supply-siders tout John F. Kennedy’s tax cuts—meant to counteract the worst stock-market crash since the Great Depression—as their model. But they were not implemented in the spirit of supply-side economics at all. They were rather a form of Keynesianism, justified in the language of Cold War competition. As

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H. W. Brands notes, Kennedy was the first president to claim that the government had an obligation to ensure economic growth. It is a sign of how thoroughly conservatism has absorbed progressivism that most of us take JFK's view for granted. Believing it is the government's job to ensure growth is tantamount to saying that the government should superintend the economy. A captain need not keep his hand on the tiller every second to remain a captain, and today's "laissez faire" means "Let it be—until things take a bad turn." In short, conservatives, too, have accepted that there is a science of human progress.

I offer no solutions here, in part because it is difficult to see exactly where the problems lie. The West may need a new metaphysics to deal with the challenges of modernity. I am not up to the task of crafting one. But conservatives could help that project along by asking themselves more regularly whether they favor something because it is right in itself, or simply because they like its outcome. **NR**

■ EUROPE

Yugoslavia, Dead and Gone

The meaning of the Montenegrins and their breakaway

DAVID PRYCE-JONES

HANDS up if you can point to Montenegro on the map. Only those with a special interest in the Balkans are likely to be able to identify this pinprick of a country with a beautiful stretch of the Adriatic and towering mountains in the background. Even those with that special interest tend to think of it as Serbia's little brother. The people there, almost 700,000 of them, speak Serbian, more or less. And yet in a national referendum they have just voted for independence from Serbia.

Self-rule for Montenegrins may not look like a tidal wave in this troubled world, but all the same it is heartwarming evidence that human beings can break free from their past, especially important when that past is choked with folly and crime. The Montenegrin vote brings the curtain down on some 80 years of experimenting with an entity called Yugoslavia, and about 45 years of experimenting with Communism there.

In one of his more rhapsodic poems, Tennyson praised Montenegrins as "chaste, frugal, savage," and went on to compress their history up till then into three lines:

O smallest among peoples! Rough
rock-throne
Of freedom! Warriors beating back
the swarm
Of Turkish Islam for five hundred years.

Mr. Pryce-Jones is an NR senior editor whose latest book, *Betrayal: The French, the Arabs, and the Jews*, will be published by Encounter in the fall.

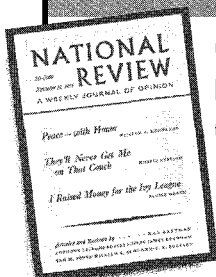
Perhaps the only Montenegrin with a worldwide reputation is Milovan Djilas. He has described the very un-Tennysonian reality of life governed by tribal custom in those mountains. His great-grandfather, two grandfathers, his father and uncle and his own brothers, were all killed in feuds "as though a dread curse lay on them." The fears and hatreds of these primitive feuds, he says, were stronger than fear and hatred of the Turks.

In Tennyson's day, a monarchy replaced the line of warrior bishops traditionally ruling the country and holding off the Turks. In his capital of Podgorica, King Nicholas had a palace known as The Biljarda on account of its billiard table imported from England, and he became famous for sitting on the palace steps to receive visitors. The novelist Anthony Hope borrowed local elements for his fictionalized Balkan state of Ruritania, and so did Franz Lehár for *The Merry Widow* (Pontevedria!).

It was too good to last. The First World War began with the aggression of Serbian nationalists against the Austro-Hungarian empire. Fortunate enough to end up on the winning side, these undeserving nationalists claimed as their spoils "Greater Serbia," a completely imperialist figment comprising territories inhabited by Croats, Slovenes, Hungarians, Macedonians, Bosnians, Albanians, and others. In the peace process of Versailles, the Serbs had their way, and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was duly welded from other peoples and their homelands. The Serbian army chased King Nicholas off his throne and incorporated Montenegro into their new kingdom. His descendant today lives in Paris, but renounces any claim.

The Versailles peacemakers were astonishingly ignorant about the Balkans, but then they equally knew almost nothing about the diverse provinces of Mesopotamia, which they were simultaneously revamping as the Kingdom of Iraq. Expert advisers such as Professor R. W. Seton-Watson and Henry Wickham Steed fabricated the wholly imaginary identity of "South Slav," which amalgamated the various Balkan peoples now liberated from the Austro-Hungarian empire. Peoples of multiple ethnicities and religions were to be obliged to live in a unitary state when they had

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no wish to do so, and every incentive to destroy it. Obvious bias in favor of the Serbs further stamped the whole enterprise as dishonest. "The strong wine of Serbia," as Seton-Watson notoriously let slip, should not be dissolved "in the weak water of Yugoslavia." Intellectuals alone are capable of this kind of sentimental romancing about other people. T. E. Lawrence of Arabia was tangling his superiors up in similar fantasies about Sunni supremacy in Iraq.

Between the wars, Yugoslav politicians fatally exchanged shots in the Belgrade parliament, and the king, a Serb naturally, was assassinated by Croat terrorists. Invading in April 1941 in one of the Second War's blitzkriegs, Hitler smashed the Yugoslavia of Versailles. A Serbian nationalist and monarchist movement under Gen. Draza Mihailovic immediately aimed to restore the status quo, but the Communists were determined to forestall them and seize power.

Before the war, the Yugoslav Communist party probably had no more than 200 members. Its leader was Josip Broz, known by his nom de guerre of Tito. Born in 1892, Tito had become a Communist while serving in the First War. Appointed a Comintern official in Moscow, he had been too junior to be purged in the Great Terror that killed off potential Yugoslav rivals, but senior enough to study and absorb Stalin's brutality.

As the German occupation settled in, the British sent a military mission to support Mihailovic. What happened next remains controversial to this day, but it appears that highly placed British Communists like James Klugmann—a figure quite as traitorous as Kim Philby—were able to falsify field reports in order to discredit Mihailovic by ascribing his operational successes to the Communists and accusing him of collaborating with the Germans. Churchill accordingly switched to support Tito, a decision that he later regretted as the worst he had made in the war.

By the usual means of deception and crime, Tito replaced "Greater Serbia" with another political fabrication, "the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia." As the war was ending, he made sure that his Communist partisans eliminated opponents. The royal family was evicted; a firing squad shot Mihailovic; the Cardinal

Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac was sentenced to 16 years of forced labor on trumped-up charges (Pope John Paul II was to beatify him). A prolonged campaign of mass murder left probably as many as 200,000 victims. Not so long ago, some 20,000 corpses were discovered in a remote canyon into which they had been thrown. John Corsellis and Marcus Ferrar have just published a book about outrages Corsellis witnessed in Austria in 1945. Six thousand Yugoslav civilians and 12,000 members of an anti-Communist home guard had fled there for safety, but British soldiers forcibly delivered them all to Tito's men, who tortured and executed them. The perfidy remains inexplicable. Helping one way and another to put the Communists into power, the British condemned the country to stand in the front line of the Cold War.

Stalin at first was delighted with his apt pupil. Milovan Djilas was then Tito's right-hand man and possible successor, and he has recorded how on a mission to Moscow he listened to Stalin encourag-

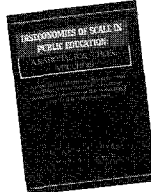
ing the Yugoslavs to ever more crime. Stalin took it for granted that Yugoslavia would duly take its subservient place in the Soviet bloc. Unexpectedly, Tito jibbed; he had acquired his own taste for absolute power. Yugoslavia, he decided, would be Communist in its own way. Enraged by this hubris, Stalin made the memorable but vain threat that he had only to shake his little finger and Tito would fall.

Dramatic in itself, the breach with the Soviet Union further served to establish Tito on the world stage. Along with leaders in India and Africa, he could pose as an independent nationalist and anti-imperialist, counting on American approval of his resistance to the Kremlin, as well as supportive swarms of Third Worlders, Trotskyites, socialist intellectuals, and, not least, former members of the British military mission. Misplaced sentimentality thus continued to overwhelm reality.

Tito's "socialist republic" in fact imitated the Soviet model, with Five Year Plans, a Central Committee, Workers

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Councils—and the secret police suppressing dissent, especially if it was nationalist. The poet Miodrag Pavlovic once took me to a bookstore in Belgrade, only to back out in panic because Alexander Rankovic, Tito's Beria, was browsing there. From the window of his apartment in Zagreb, another poet, Vlado Gotovac, pointed out the secret policemen watching us. A Croat, he was later sentenced to prison for nationalism, but after the collapse of Yugoslavia he was elected to the Croatian parliament.

Djilas himself had just come out of nine years in prison when I met him in his house. He was shockingly emaciated. Communism was the dread curse that lay on him, and he was determined to break it. The country's component nations should be free, but unless the United States won the Cold War, he warned, small nations like his and mine (Britain) were doomed to slavery. How tenaciously he fought what once he had helped to impose, with an impact on public opinion comparable to Solzhenitsyn's.

Tito appropriated royal palaces for himself, he loved expensive cars and horses and wines, and in his corruption, his fancy uniforms and self-awarded medals and even his bloated waistline, he came to resemble the late Hermann Goering. Boulevards in cities like Accra and Delhi are still named after him; otherwise nothing of the man survives.

Slobodan Milosevic, his successor, had a final shot at perpetuating the fantasy of "Greater Serbia." A petty crook without Tito's condottiere swagger, he persuaded a mixed bag of intellectuals and politicians—some of them in the British and American governments—to support him. This too was inexplicable. Together they doomed the artificial construct of Yugoslavia to go down in bloody ruin. The landscape has acquired more mass graves as memorials.

As a result, though, the "socialist republic" has finally gone the way of the former kingdom. *Yugoslav* is a term as extinct as *Soviet*. The constituent peoples now have won their separate nation-states, although the international protectorates of Bosnia and Kosovo remain unsettled business. Montenegro in particular has its long-delayed chance to live up to Tennyson's vision of it as a "rough rock-throne of freedom." NR

■ CULTURE WATCH

The Complicated Life

What computer geeks (and others) wrought

FLORENCE KING

As Socrates undoubtedly would have said, the complicated life is not worth living, but then Americans have never been known for paying much attention to Socrates.

Last week after buying a new laptop, I ran into a man who had been in the store at the same time and overheard me grouching about the rebate system. Catching up with me in the parking lot, he launched into what he thought was a helpful story about how to handle rebates and warranties. He and his wife were a high-tech couple with four high-tech children, he explained. They usually had a dozen or more purchases going at once, but his wife had devised a foolproof system to keep track of everything.

She has this big, I mean *big*, spiral binder with see-through document pockets in all different colors. First, she cuts the bar codes off the boxes, makes four or five copies of each one, and puts them in a clear document cover. She sends in the rebates by certified mail, with return-receipt cards so we can prove that they got 'em. Then she makes copies of all the post-office forms and puts them in a green document pocket—the post-office forms are green too, see, so you can color-coordinate and find them in a jiffy. Copies of their credit-card bills, along with copies of their bank statements to show proof of debit-card purchases, all go in red—ha-ha—document pockets. Orig-

Florence King's NATIONAL REVIEW columns are collected in *STET, Damniti! The Misanthrope's Corner, 1991 to 2002*.

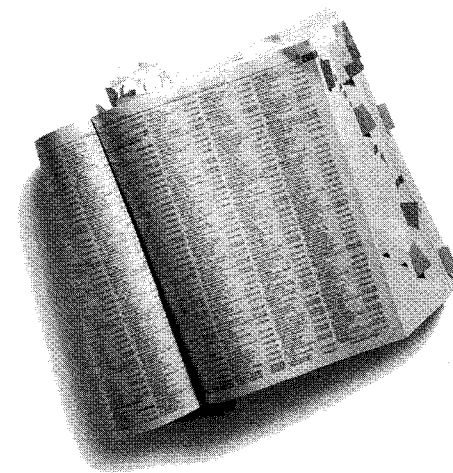
nals and copies of their warranties, along with originals and copies of their cash-register receipts, go in yellow document pockets. Plus, just in case, she cuts out all the newspaper ads for the stuff they buy at big advertised sales, makes copies of each one, and keeps the whole shebang in an orange document pocket with removable date stamps.

At first, he went on, she xeroxed everything at her office, but her boss complained, so they bought their own home copier machine.

"And it came with a rebate and warranty," I interrupted, "so she used it to make copies of them and put them in her binder too?"

"You better believe it!" he said proudly.

"Why do you have to make so many copies of everything?"



He grew solemn. "Because you don't know how many people you might have to give copies to. There's the Better Business Bureau, the Federal Trade Commission, consumer advocates, your state legislator, your congressman, your lawyer, *their* lawyer."

I almost said "and the sheriff?" but stopped, afraid that he had a story about it. I also wondered about his marriage ("Not tonight. I have to color-coordinate the rebates with the newspaper ads").

Curious, I googled the subject of rebates and warranties and discovered that high-tech America has upgraded the Gordian knot. Buying what we now call "stuff" is to enter into a world of frustration and despair where crying in the wilderness of Customer Support has become a way of life. On one site, people told about having to return the same defective product three times; a company

WILLIAM WHITEHURST/CORBIS

that refused to sell them a small inexpensive part so they could fix the problem themselves; a shipped item that was shipped back C.O.D. because the original packing materials had not been used; and unyielding lectures from Satinder in Bombay about what happens to the warranties of people who mistreat their poor old motherboards.

I stopped reading after 50 hits but I had the general idea. I also understood the instant metaphor that sprang up around the resignation of Andrew Card as White House chief of staff. "He sleeps with his BlackBerry on his chest!" exclaimed one pundit after another, describing Card's 18-hour work days. At the time it seemed far-fetched but now it made sense: It was praise of the highest order, but not for his long hours. They really were saying that he never turned over in bed because it would void the warranty.

America signed up for the complicated life around 1980 when early-computer geeks appeared on the scene and lured us into the 21st century. We followed them, but we overlooked a vital difference between them and earlier business leaders. The cut-through-the-crap captains of industry who dominated the turn of the previous century had the contemptuous impatience that defines all colorful people, but the geeks, singularly lacking in robber-baron swagger, cut through simplicity and enshrined crap.

Crap is now our lifeline. As bureaucrats have always known, dealing in needlessly overcomplicated matters makes people feel important and powerful. Beset by a host of unprecedented fears that we must hold at bay, 21st-century Americans have made crap our bulwark of choice. Like the couple with the color-coordinated Doomsday Book, we use crap to puff ourselves up into a state of false security. Like the bloggers competing to see who can tell the best help-line horror story, we secretly welcome crap as a challenge, something to pit ourselves against to prove that we still have a handle on things. Desperate to believe that America is not in decline, we tell ourselves that coping successfully with crap is evidence of an upgraded pioneer spirit.

The complicated life has spread beyond high-tech consumerism into the realm of crap for crap's sake. Of the many staple products that did not need upgrading but

were upgraded anyway, two stand out. The first used to be called the yellow pages; it is now called the Yellow Book or the Other Book and you can't find anything in either of them. One reason for the confusion is the relaxed attitude toward advertising by doctors and lawyers. Whole pages are thrown out of whack by photos of smiling medicos perched jauntily on their examining tables, surrounded by satellite photos of their smiling nurses and splashy testimonials about what a nest of compassion the place is. Another problem is page after page of lists: volunteer groups, counseling services, recreation centers, all with photos that serve no telephone-book purpose—a picture of a bench in a park, groups of people looking earnest, or a kid jumping off a diving board into a swimming pool that, unfortunately, has water in it.

The other example of pointless complication is the new rolled rim on the bottom of canned food. We used to be able to extract solid foods like tomato aspic or thick foods like cream soups by cutting out the bottom lid with a can opener and using the lid to push out the contents so they emerged in a perfect can-shaped log. Now you can't get the can opener around the bottom rim; you have to perform a D&C on the contents and you never get it all.

Is anybody openly defying the complicated life? Well, yes. The midwife movement has less to do with feminism than with a yen to do *something* without making a big deal out of it. Homeschooling holds the same charm. Not only does it promise freedom from new math, sex ed, tattoos, navel rings, butt cleavage, and Twinkies vending machines in the hallways, but freedom from memos, surveys, and questionnaires about them. Otherwise, we are all guilty, as the saying goes, none moreso than . . .

Conservatives. You heard me. Ask a liberal what he is and he says "I'm a liberal." Ask one of us and the answer can go on forever. Neo-Con or Paleo-Con? Or you can be a Populist Con, a Compassionate Con, a Libertarian Con, a National Greatness Con, and now, compliments of Rod Dreher, a "Crunchy" Con. If you want to take it into the realm of unresisting imbecility you can claim, like Jack Kemp, to be a "bleeding-heart conservative." If you identify as a Neo-

Con, you will immediately be asked "What were you before?" because conservatives of both sexes have maiden names.

Your answer may also require you to quote something. When I identify as a George Orwell conservative I end up having to explain what a Tory Anarchist is, which takes me into Max Beerbohm. If I identify as an elitist conservative I have to recite the T. S. Eliot bit about "Politics, royalism; literature, classicism; theology, Anglo-Catholicism." By now I sound like a warranty but it's not over yet. I have to explain that the third category doesn't fit because I'm a non-believer, whereupon my audience demands, "Then how can you be a conservative?"

Simple. I say I'm an Atheicon. This way I am mistaken for either a Greek poetic meter, or a Rx drug for which BushCare will pay 32.6 percent except when your co-pay is limited to 11.2 percent of the gross deductible, less a one-time 2.7 percent penalty (some exceptions). NR

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A Fight to The Finish

What the GOP Congress should do to stay on top

KATE O'BEIRNE & RICHARD LOWRY

FOR Republicans, Brian Bilbray's narrow victory to keep disgraced former representative Duke Cunningham's seat in the GOP column was certainly better than the alternative. But the good news stops there. It was a solidly Republican district that the GOP had to scratch and claw to hold. The national party isn't going to be able to pour countless Hill staffers and \$5 million into every Republican district where a GOP candidate is underperforming this fall.

In general, Republicans should avoid the temptation to hope for the best. Hope is the enemy. Hope is the father of comforting but ultimately self-defeating illusion. Republicans shouldn't tell themselves that California means the national political environment isn't so bad; that they can safely run on local issues; that the Democrats don't have an agenda; that the Republican base can be energized solely on the basis of fear at the prospect of Speaker Pelosi; that people are mad at Congress but still like their own congressman.

There might be a grain of truth to almost all of those things, but if voters in November are as disapproving of Congress and President Bush as the public is now, none of them will matter in the tide that sweeps away the Republican majority.

The warning signs are everywhere, but just consider data from Gallup. In a sign of a dispirited GOP, 48 percent of Democrats are interested in this fall's elections, 42 percent of Republicans. In 2004, 45.5 percent called themselves Republicans, and 45.2 percent called themselves Democrats. In May, only 39 percent identified themselves as Republican and 48 percent identified themselves as Democratic.

According to Gallup, "In the five midterm elections since 1974 in which Congress' approval rating was below 40 percent, the average net change in U.S. House seats from one party to the other was 29 seats." The Republican Congress is almost at that threshold with just its own voters. A Harris poll in May found that 44 per-

cent of Republicans think Congress is doing a good or excellent job. Granted, only 40 percent of Democrats think Congress is doing a good or excellent job—but their party isn't running the place.

In several recent polls, Congress's overall approval is below 30 percent.

OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE

This is nothing short of a political crisis. In addressing it, we aren't going to propose grand schemes that have absolutely no chance of coming to fruition—say, passing the flat tax. Nor are we going to call for an extensive Contract-style ten-point agenda, since it is too late for that. When you count only days in session, Congress literally has just a matter of weeks to do something about its dreadful public standing. Instead, there are a few key matters that will be of outsize importance in saving the Republican congressional majority.

The Republican priority has to be twofold: to restore Congress's credibility with the broader public and to restore it with conservatives. These are somewhat overlapping goals. The image of Congress has been tainted by the Jack Abramoff scandal and, lately, the bipartisan operation to protect cash-grubbing congressman William Jefferson's office from a Justice Department search. Conservative voters have been affected by these events as much as anyone, but their confidence in Congress has been further eroded by its inability to restrain spending or its appetite for pork. Addressing the ethical lapses and the fiscal incontinence will appeal to both the broader public and conservatives because it will speak to a public-spiritedness and ethic of self-control that have been lacking on Capitol Hill for too long.

That strenuous work to save the House GOP majority this year is necessary should be obvious. But a basic public-choice problem stands in the way of that realization and acting upon it. Even if the

most calamitous result for the GOP comes about and Democrats take the House, over 90 percent of Republican members keep their jobs. The majority of the majority has never served in the minority and many of them have little reason to fear it viscerally. And, no matter what, they will still be comfortable incumbents, able to enjoy the perks of office. The fact that relatively few Democrats have retired since 1995 is testament to the admittedly frustrating but apparently still fulfilling life of a junket-taking, bomb-throwing, earmark-consuming member of the minority.

So it has often seemed that maintaining Congress's comfort level rather than doing the utmost to address the sources of political discontent with it has been the priority for too many Republicans, even as they have begun to try to grapple with their perilous situation in recent months.

Fortunately, some Republicans are thinking of what the majority can do to save itself. Astute members, smart staff, and concerned outsiders are determined to develop an agenda that will get a listless majority back on track. But the starting point has to be an understanding of the frame of mind of the people Congress needs to reach. In a word, it is cynicism. No one, including conservatives, is in a mood to believe promises. They will demand concrete aims and successes.

One idea recently floating around the Hill doesn't fit the bill. Some House Republicans are now talking about wholesale tax reform. They are thinking of voting to sunset the tax code by a date certain—again. The House already voted in April 2000 to sunset the code. The idea is that it would be replaced by either a flat tax or a sales tax—and while radical tax reform is a worthy goal, the sunset idea seems like a gimmick (probably because it is). It is opposed by some conservatives, like Larry Kudlow, because of the huge uncertainty it presents for businesses and individuals. Which tax should replace the current system splits conservatives even further.

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

So, what should a Republican agenda for the rest of the year look like? Nervous candidates would prefer a list of agenda items that tiptoes around the top issue that has been hurting Republicans this year: Iraq. But it's not possible. According to a Gallup survey in May, 42 percent of respondents said that Iraq is the top priority for the president and Congress. The next highest issues were fuel prices at 29 percent, immigration at 23 percent, and the economy at 14 percent.

The House Republican leadership, finally, recognizes that Hill elephants should stop ignoring the elephant in the room. In mid-June, the floor debate on a resolution by Rep. Henry Hyde (R.-Ill.) expressing the determination to prevail in the global war on terrorism, including the war in Iraq, provided a forum for members to discuss the progress and the goals of the war in Iraq. Similar forums should be held back home.

If, as Republican strategists believe, 25 percent of those who now think that the war in Iraq was a mistake are former hawks, it should be possible to get some of them back in the support column. Republicans don't have to convince Cindy Sheehan that the war is a noble and winnable cause. The chances are that these persuadable former hawks are disproportionately in Republican districts, and so it should be up to GOP members—not just the president—to remind them of the war's rationale: Saddam was a threat to us

and our interests; the U.N. containment regime was in danger of unraveling; Saddam had a WMD capacity and ties with terrorists; and the cost of failure is dear.

It's the last that is the most important point to make. Republicans who aren't conversant with the fluid situation on the ground should take their cues on how to talk about Iraq from John McCain. He brings a moral authority to the table that few of them will have, of course, but his message is pitch perfect. McCain always says, "We've made mistakes, but we can win, and we must win." He then emphasizes, "The Vietnamese didn't want to come after us [after the 1975 pullout]. If we fail, it will be far different." Thus McCain hits on all the items that are still likely to resonate with people who used to support the war but have become tired of it and tune out any assurances about it: We need to win, we are adjusting in light of mistakes, and the consequences of defeat would be grave.

Also, congressmen will get some credit from Republican voters for being seen as resolute and standing by the president. The alternative isn't an option. There is no running from the war at this point. That will only further depress Republican hawks and implicitly make the Democratic case that the war was a mistake. Here good policy and good politics collide. The election prospects of House Republicans will be boosted if the poll numbers for the war and for Bush tick upward.

Then there's the domestic front. The issue of immigration reform is obviously high up on the agenda. NR has already discussed the merits of the competing reform proposals extensively (see most recently "Temporary Madness," *The Week*, June 19). We agree with those House Republicans who believe they are well positioned on the issue, since they stand squarely for border and interior enforcement. Both are popular with the public and strongly favored by the Republican base. It is the Senate that has a bill offering an unpopular "path to citizenship"—which will inevitably be festooned with social-welfare payments—for illegal aliens.

If there is no reform bill this year, the House will probably be fine as long as it is seen as sticking to its commitment to securing the border. But it would be better for the party generally if an enforcement-heavy compromise bill passed into law, so Republicans would be seen as actually addressing an important national problem. Or if pro-amnesty Democrats could be made to filibuster an enforcement bill, thus taking the blame for no new action on immigration and reinforcing their politically perilous support for amnesty.

HEAL THYSELF

If House Republicans are safe on immigration, they aren't safe on the charge that they have come to Washington and gone native. It is imperative that they try to reclaim the mantle of reform, and that must start with how Congress does business. "Getting Washington's House in Order" would respond to the widespread concern that Republican members have grown far too comfortable with the perks and processes of the city their voters hoped they would take on, rather than be taken in by.

Lobbying reform, which has been languishing, should be near the top of the list. With the Abramoff scandal losing some of its salience, with Tom DeLay's resignation and the spectacular Jefferson bribery investigation replacing it in the headlines,

Republicans appear less worried that Nancy Pelosi's "culture of corruption" charge will stick. While it is true that congressional corruption is a bipartisan affair, Republicans are in charge and remain one new headline away from being the more corrupt caucus yet again.

Meaningful reform would be more painful for members of Congress than the more onerous reporting requirements that they now want to impose on lobbyists. Saying goodbye to privately funded travel, for instance, would hurt, but it is also the kind of stark measure that might actually break through with the public. Such travel cannot be credibly defended on any grounds other than that it is a nice perk that members enjoy. One of the authors of a recent damning study of privately funded travel wrote, "In many instances, trip sponsors appeared to be buying access to elected officials or their advisors." No kidding.

Members and their trip sponsors argue that they have to get away from Washington, without distractions and demands on members so they can listen and learn about important issues. Why is their hearing particularly acute in Paris (200 trips in the last five years), Hawaii (150), and Italy (140)?

Over the five and a half years ending in 2005, members and their aides took 23,000 trips valued at almost \$50 million, with 2,300 of the trips costing \$5,000 or more. At least 500 getaways cost \$10,000. House members and aides were the most frequent fliers. Somehow senators and their staff find they can generally get up to speed on issues without frequenting luxury resorts.

The profligacy of the Bush years is the background to all the current conservative distemper.

On no issue is there such a stark split between outside conservatives and inside conservatives—those who aren't on the Hill and are willing to contemplate serious action, and those who are on the Hill and so blanch at the prospect—than earmarks. Talk to almost any Republican strategist about things the House needs to do to win back the trust of its supporters, and he will say, "Eliminate earmarks." When a recent NBC/*Wall Street Journal* poll asked which issue was the most important for Congress to act on before a coming recess, 39 percent said eliminating earmarks, with immigration reform coming in second at 32 percent. They are the most dramatic symbol of Republicans' becoming parochial, corrupt, and far too cozy with K Street. But mention the idea to anyone who works on the Hill and the immediate response is, "Never gonna happen."

By now the story is familiar. According to Citizens Against Government Waste, there were 1,439 earmarks in appropriations bills in 1995; there were 13,997 in 2005. The number of earmarks in highway reauthorization bills shot from 538 in 1991 to 6,371 in 2005. There is roughly \$27 billion a year spent on special-interest pork-barrel projects. While much of this money would be spent anyway (although where exactly it went would be determined by the executive branch), eliminating earmarks is not just a process or symbolic issue. Congressional Democrats expanded government for over 40 years without the Republican-style dependence on earmarks, which are frequently used to buy the support of conservative members for big spending bills. Their elimination would

reduce lobbyists' influence and stop rent-seeking by Republican members.

A private-travel ban and the elimination of earmarks would send the message that Republicans are still reformers, and that they can clean up their own practices and put the public interest above their own lifestyles. But these measures alone wouldn't restore congressional credibility. Republicans still have to face the issue of spending.

'A PENNY ON THE DOLLAR'

The profligacy of the Bush years is the background to all the current conservative distemper. In addition to overall process reform, concrete spending cuts would provide needed evidence of Republicans' self-restraint, lest conservatives associate their governance with the bumper-sticker phrase, "Washington Republicans—can't control the border or government spending."

Smart strategists agree that the party needs a spending fight. Republicans have actually had a few of those, and had some substantive success. This year House Republicans will hold spending to a smaller increase than in past years (as they did last year), with lots of Sturm und Drang. But they won't get much credit for "holding non-defense discretionary spending to the smallest growth in years," because it is too abstract an accomplishment. Likewise, savings achieved by tinkering with a few big entitlement programs don't make much of a political impact either.

High-profile across-the-board cuts, like the old John Kasich–Tim

Penny proposal to reduce overall spending by 1 percent, are far more likely to capture public attention and win the support of the conservative base. Back in 1994, the slogan was "a penny on the dollar." It was easily understood and the public appreciates that there is not a budget in the world that can't be trimmed by 1 percent without courting any dire consequences (including defense). Such a cut would lower the federal budget's baseline and so its benefits would continue to accrue.

If Republicans want credit for spending restraint, they also should have some high-profile program eliminations. Corporate welfare presents obvious targets. It seems inexplicable that Republicans haven't taken up this issue despite the fact that every conservative think tank has pushed them to do it for years. But the influence of business lobbyists and farm-state members has preserved Washington's "spending for the rich."

According to the Heritage Foundation, last year the federal government spent \$53 billion on homeland security and \$60 billion on corporate welfare. Republicans should eliminate programs like the "Advanced Technology Program" that spends more than \$150 million a year to subsidize needy recipients like IBM, General Electric, and Motorola. Two-thirds of farm subsidies go to the top 10 percent of those receiving subsidies. Heritage proposes capping farm subsidies at \$250,000 per farm, and taking agribusinesses and gentleman farmers, such as Sam Donaldson and Ted Turner, off the dole.

The elimination of no program would do more to boost conservative spirits than ending federal funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. The predictable howls of outrage over eliminating this liberal subsidy would be an invaluable advertisement for Republican budget-cutting that the GOP Congress couldn't otherwise get for budget cuts many times larger. In early June, a House Appropriations subcommittee (on a party-line vote, of course) approved a cut of \$115 million in the budget for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a 23 percent reduction to "only" \$380 million next year. "Dick Cheney and the Republicans have decided to go hunting [get it?] for 'Big Bird' and 'Clifford the Big Red Dog' once again," said Rep. Edward Markey (D., Mass.). This tired charge underscores how vulnerable publicly funded radio and TV are in an age when hundreds of cable and satellite television choices are available to consumers.

Republicans ought to pledge to eliminate CPB funding entirely and redirect the hundreds of millions to homeland-security needs, including restoring the scheduled cuts to New York and Washington, D.C. Let's see what Hillary Clinton does when she is asked to choose between protecting Big Bird and the Brooklyn Bridge.

A BROADER AGENDA

When Republicans have acted to restore their credibility on reform and spending, they can talk about larger policy goals and have people begin to listen to them again.

On other issues, Republicans should adopt the proposal advanced by Republican National Committee chairman Ken Mehlman of announcing large public-policy goals, and the concrete steps toward getting there. He talks about adopting "aspirational goals with achievable means." With respect to health-care reform, for example, the goal is for every American to own his own health plan, and the concrete, achievable steps include Health Savings Accounts and association health plans for small businesses. The means of achieving the goal of making America energy independent in 25 years would include drilling offshore and in ANWR, increasing our refinery capacity, and promoting nuclear power.

It clearly is a time when conservatives are in the mood for spending cuts over tax cuts, but tax cuts are still important. Having voted to extend President Bush's tax cuts, Republicans should commit to making the next round of tax cuts pro-family by raising the standard deduction and boosting the child credit. As Ramesh Ponnuru pointed out last year, inflation has been permitted to erode the tax provisions that once made generous allowances for the costs of raising children (see "Ladies and Gentleman, a Tax Reform," November 7, 2005).

When considering all of this, some Republicans are likely to think, "Why are contentious fights over Iraq, congressional reform, and spending necessary—we're going to hold the House anyway." The consequences if that calculation is wrong are enormous, of course. But even if the benefits of incumbency and the prospect of Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Jack Murtha combine to keep Congress under Republican control, the GOP majority should be purposeful and worthy of support. An agenda that returns the congressional majority to the principles that won them office in the first place can both save the GOP majority this year and make it actually worth having next year.

NR

■ THE RIGHT

George Will vs. The Social Cons

What's his beef?

RAMESH PONNURU

WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR., writing in 1992, called George Will "the most under-celebrated benefactor of the conservative movement in my lifetime." I don't believe that is the case today. Not, mind you, that Will is *over*-celebrated now. But the issues that separated most conservatives from Will in that era, such as taxes and gun control, no longer do, either because Will has changed his mind (as in the former case) or the public agenda changed (the latter).

Conservatives at that time mistook his intellectual independence from their movement for susceptibility to the blandishments of its opponents. By now they have come to realize that he is not trying to curry favor with, or speak for, any constituency. It is this quality, along with his obvious intellectual and literary talents, that has made him one of our most valuable commentators. Thoughtful conservatives have always recognized this. When he expressed opposition to nation-building in Iraq, at a time when almost all of them were supporting it, they gave his case the same cool consideration with which he made it. Will is justly celebrated.

While it has not drawn as much attention as his dissent on Iraq, the evidence is mounting that Will has had it with social conservatives. When his recent columns have touched on them, he has been markedly critical. Thoughtful conservatives should respond by carefully considering whether social conservatives are going off the rails, or gaining too much influence within the conservative coalition. But this is a rare instance in which Will has done as much to muddy as to clarify the issues.

That too great an influence could reduce the appeal of the Republican party was the theme of one of his columns in September 2004. "[T]he dominance of the cultural conservatives gave force to the Democrats' and the media's caricatures of the Republican Party as a brackish lagoon of intolerance, a caricature that, like all caricatures, contained a trace of truth." These cultural conservatives had, in Barry Goldwater's last years, "excommunicated him because of his support for abortion rights and his relaxed views regarding homosexuality." But the prominence of Arnold Schwarzenegger and Rudolph Giuliani at the Republican convention that had just concluded offered reasons for hope. "The reemergence into Republican respectability of conservatism with a socially libertarian cast—Goldwaterism—

Mr. Ponnuru is an NR senior editor and the author of *Party of Death: The Democrats, the Media, the Courts, and the Disregard for Human Life*.

is a development with a large potential to discomfort the Democratic Party."

Will has fallen for some historical revisionism. As Andrew Busch recently reminded us in the *Claremont Review of Books*, "Goldwaterism," circa 1964, was not libertarian on social issues. Goldwater campaigned in favor of school prayer and against the widespread availability of "smut." ("The moral fiber of the American people is beset by rot and decay," he said in a televised address.) Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, Senator Goldwater voted against abortion and gay rights. When relations between the social Right and Goldwater grew testy in the mid-1980s, it was as much because Goldwater was anathematizing the former ("Every good Christian should kick Falwell in the ass") as because he had changed his mind on those issues.

Will recognized, in this column, that the rise of "social-issues conservatism" aided the Republican party in the South. But that rather understates the case. The Republican party's shift from minority to majority status at the very least coincided with its turn to social conservatism, which gave it new appeal to, among others, traditionalist Catholics. And painful as it is for conservatives to concede, it would never have reached majority status had it retained Goldwater's flinty anti-statism. (Goldwater said we should get rid of the Tennessee Valley Authority, while campaigning in Tennessee.)

Giuliani and Schwarzenegger are not government-cutters. They are "Goldwaterites" only in the sense that they share Goldwater's late-1980s social views. Even on those issues, they do not have his pugnacity. They have not tried to change the Republican party's socially conservative definition or expended much energy in fighting social conservatives.

THE VICTIM CARD

Will's criticisms of social conservatives here were only glancing. His emphasis was on the political advantages of opening the party to libertarians. His tone began to change around the time of the Terri Schiavo case. He did not write a column about it, and did not weigh in on whether (or under what circumstances) the law should allow the withholding of food and water from a patient in order to bring about death.

A few weeks after Schiavo's death, however, he wrote a column about how "many Christians are joining today's scramble for the status of victims." Their "persecution complex" is especially "unbecoming" given their enormous political influence. That influence was displayed during the Schiavo episode, when President Bush "and his party seemed to have subcontracted governance to certain especially fervid religious supporters."

Further evidence of their influence was that Bush had recently "felt it necessary to declare that unbelievers can be good Americans." Will omitted the context of that remark. Bush often makes fairly anodyne references to religion, such as "May God continue to bless America." Will writes that "unbelievers should not cavil about this acknowledgment of majority sensibilities." But the fact, unmentioned by Will, is that many unbelievers, and others, do cavil about it. They say that Bush's rhetoric excludes atheists and agnostics, making them feel as though they were outsiders in their own

country. Bush was trying to placate the critics. He was responding, that is, to an influential effort to cast unbelievers as victims. (That effort has been rather more successful in American courts than have attempts to place Christians in the victim role.)

Will thus exaggerated the extent to which conservative Christians are the aggressors in our cultural conflicts, as he had done with respect to Goldwater's "excommunication." He concluded his column by warning that "Republicans should not seem to require, de facto, what the Constitution forbids, de jure": a religious test for office.

Three months later, Bill Frist came out for federal funding of embryonic-stem-cell research. Will excoriated social conservatives—a phrase he put in sneer quotes—for their "scalding" criticism of Frist. "Some 'social conservatives' . . . insist, simultaneously, that Frist made a gross political blunder and that he sacrificed principles to politics. This train wreck of logic makes one's head hurt." Only if one's head is hurt easily. Political life abounds with examples of erroneous calculations of self-interest.

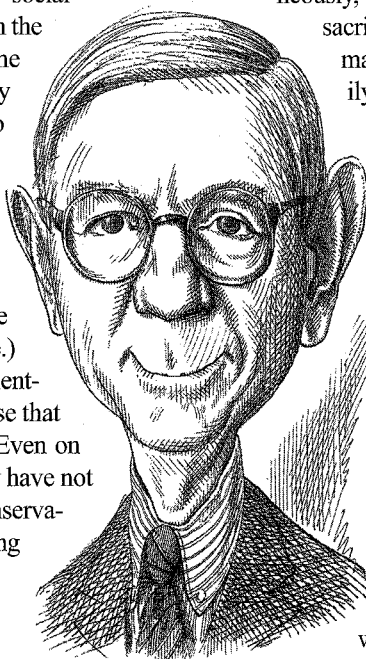
Will noted that Frist favored research only on embryos taken from fertility clinics. He had not "crosse[d] the scarlet line" to support cloning human embryos to produce stem cells. "Many thoughtful people," Will allowed, worried that Frist's policy would lead in short order to cloning. "Life, however, is lived on a slippery slope: Taxation could become confiscation; police could become gestapos." Yet some slopes are more slippery than others. Most supporters of the police do not favor gestapos. Most supporters of the legislation Frist endorsed do favor cloning. People who had insisted, a few years previously, on the same distinction that Frist and Will made decided later that cloning was necessary to yield the benefits sought from stem-cell research.

Frist himself argued that we needed to fund embryo-destructive research because failing to do so would slow the advance of medicine. That argument is a rolling justification for the serial erasure of scarlet lines. Will was able to say that Frist's critics were engaged in "slapdash thinking" only by not engaging their criticisms seriously.

By the end of 2005, Will was spoiling for a fight between "social conservatives" and "limited-government conservatives." The former were busybodies, using "intelligent design" to "try to compel public education to infuse theism into scientific education." The latter, seeing those busybodies and the Republicans' failure to cut spending, might leave the Republican party. It is a slapdash distinction. The spending-cutters and the social conservatives in Congress are largely the same people. The Republican congressmen who most heartily agreed with Will about evolution are the most likely to disagree with him about Medicaid cuts.

WHO IS A REAL CONSERVATIVE?

The new year brought a Supreme Court decision on assisted suicide and federalism. Federal law requires that drugs be prescribed only for a "legitimate medical purpose." When Oregon legalized physician-assisted suicide for terminally ill patients, did it make



George F. Will

assisted suicide legitimate medicine under federal law? Attorney General John Ashcroft did not think so, and tried to prevent Oregon physicians from prescribing lethal drugs. The Court ruled that Ashcroft was wrong. Until Congress explicitly says otherwise, assisted suicide counts as a legitimate medical purpose in Oregon. The three most conservative justices—Roberts, Scalia, and Thomas (Alito not having been confirmed yet)—dissented.

The Court had deferred to a state and left Congress free to change its statute. “So,” Will asked, “what is conservative about conservatives’ complaints about the court’s decision?” Will has a weakness for this kind of ex cathedra pronouncement about who is and isn’t a real conservative. But to exclude Roberts, Scalia, and Thomas is to stretch even his rhetorical authority. In their opinion, the Court had given Oregon something more than deference; it had applied novel standards to reach a result favorable to assisted suicide. Had the dissenters prevailed, Congress would have been just as free to pass a law letting Oregon physicians expedite their patients’ deaths. The only difference would have been which side had the burden of winning a legislative majority.

In the course of this column, Will got in another Schiavo shot, describing social conservatives (no sneer quotes this time) as “unchastened by public disgust about their attempt 10 months ago to drag the federal government into the Terri Schiavo tragedy.” But social conservatives didn’t drag the federal government into this tragedy; it was there from the start. The Supreme Court had ruled, in 1990, that all states had to make it possible for a surrogate to direct that a feeding tube be removed from an incapacitated patient. Florida, Schiavo’s home state, never had a choice about whether to comply. Social conservatives were merely trying to contain the damage from that federal intervention.

In his most recent column on social conservatives, Will complained about their adoption of the label “values voters.” What bloc, he asked, does not use its votes to advance its values? The phrase “subtracts from social comity by suggesting that one group has cornered the market on moral seriousness.” He has a point. But there is no perfect term for the group that “values voters” attempts to describe. Calling them the “pro-family movement” would imply that its opponents are anti-family. Using “moral conservatives” would render other conservatives immoral. Will, as we have seen, finds the phrase “social conservatives” problematic, too.

In the 2004 election, exit pollsters asked voters which of several issues had been the most important to them. Twenty-two percent picked “moral values” as their top issue, and 80 percent of those voted for Bush. So while it is true that all voters have values, it is also true that some people are more likely than others to identify themselves as voting based on their values. They tend, moreover, to vote as a bloc. The phrase “values voters” caught on more

because it was irresistible journalistic shorthand than because it flattered them. The phrase is at least as defensible as the label “progressive,” which does not describe people who have a monopoly on friendliness to progress.

In passing, Will suggested that a constitutional amendment defining marriage as the union of a man and a woman would constitute another offense against federalism—a reasonable, if debatable, position—and that it would “clutter” the Constitution, which is just silly. Marriage policy is at least as important as letters of marque and reprisal.

Social conservatives often deserve criticism, even sharp criticism, and some of Will’s hits the mark. What fair-minded observer would deny that they can be intolerant, or self-righteous? Will is right to say that too often they play the victim card. They do, sometimes, overreach. Will is probably right to consider both intelligent design and the marriage amendment instances of such overreaching. (I would also point to the insistence, by many social conservatives, that America is in some constitutional sense a “Christian nation.”) Social conservatives, whatever they should be called, can learn from his rebukes. By any sensible reckoning, Will is, even today, a moderate social conservative himself. But lately, when social conservatives are the topic, Will’s reasoning loses its customary intricacy.

How to explain it? I will venture a guess. George Will is the most coolly analytical of commentators. (He is cool even—especially—when he is scorching.) Look closely, however, and it is just possible to see that his thought is being distorted by an emotion. It is a powerful yet underrated emotion: irritation.

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In the Name of The Animals

America faces a new kind of terrorism

JOHN J. MILLER

SIX days after the World Trade Center was destroyed, the New York Stock Exchange rang its opening bell and traders sang "God Bless America" from the floor: They wanted to send a loud-and-clear message to the world that al-Qaeda could not shut down the U.S. economy. Even though the Dow suffered its biggest one-day point-loss in history, the mere fact that buying and selling could resume so quickly marked an inspiring day for capitalism and against terrorism.

On September 7, 2005, however, terrorists struck again, and the NYSE still hasn't recovered. This time, they didn't target a couple of skyscrapers near the exchange, but rather a company called Life Sciences Research (LSR). It had recently qualified for a NYSE listing and its senior management had gathered on Wall Street to celebrate the occasion. Just a few minutes before the first trades were set to occur, NYSE president Catherine Kinney informed her guests that their listing would be postponed. It was immediately obvious to everyone from LSR what had happened: "A handful of animal extremists had succeeded where Osama bin Laden had failed," Mark Bibi, the company's general counsel, would say in congressional testimony the next month.

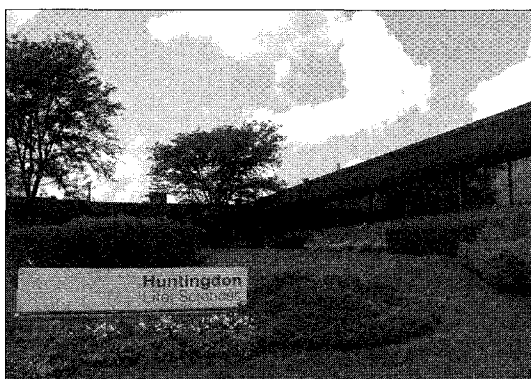
LSR is better known by the name of its operating subsidiary, Huntingdon Life Sciences (HLS), which is in the business of testing products on animals to assess their safety and comply with government regulations. Most people probably don't like to think about what goes on in these labs—vivisections of monkeys, for instance—but they also appreciate the importance of research whose ultimate goal is the protection and enhancement of human health. About 95 percent of all lab animals are rats and mice, but for animal-rights extremists who believe that "a rat is a pig is a dog is a boy" (as Ingrid Newkirk of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals once said), the whole endeavor is deeply immoral. And some of them have decided that because the traditional practices of honest persuasion and civil disobedience haven't changed many hearts or minds, they must now adopt a different strategy—something they euphemistically call "direct action." These are efforts to intimidate and harass animal researchers and everyone who comes

into contact with them. In recent years, hardcore activists have embraced property destruction and physical assaults. "This is the number-one domestic terrorist threat in America," says Sen. James Inhofe, an Oklahoma Republican. Keeping LSR off the Big Board probably represents their greatest achievement yet.

RED IN TOOTH AND CLAW

The animal-rights movement may be wrongheaded, but there's no denying that most of its members are motivated by genuine compassion for animals and a sincere commitment to preventing cruelty. There's also no denying that violence in their name has become a significant problem. Just as the pro-life movement is haunted by the murderers of abortion doctors, the environmental and animal-rights movements are cursed by their own packs of fierce radicals. A year ago, the FBI said that 35 of its offices were conducting more than 150 investigations into "animal rights/eco-terrorist activities." The number of illegal incidents involving these activities has risen sharply, from 220 in the 1980s and 1990s to 363 in just the last five years, according to a recent report by the Foundation for Biomedical Research, an association of businesses and universities that conduct animal research. (By contrast, abortion-clinic violence appears to be subsiding.)

"Other groups don't come close in terms of the financial damage they've done," says John Lewis, an FBI agent who until recently coordinated federal efforts against domestic terrorism. Not even militants in the mold of Timothy McVeigh, the man behind the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995? "We have an acute interest in all of these groups, but when the rubber meets the road, the eco- and animal-rights terrorists lately have been way out in front." Lewis estimates that they've caused around \$100 million in damage, mostly property destruction affecting businesses, much of it from arson. This fall, eleven defendants will face trial in



A favorite target

Oregon for causing an estimated \$20 million in damage in five states.

Although animal-rights terrorism is fundamentally barbaric, its execution has assumed increasingly sophisticated forms. The campaign against Huntingdon Life Sciences began in the United Kingdom seven years ago with the formation of a group called Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty, or SHAC. Soon after, SHAC recruited members in the United States to focus on an HLS facility in New Jersey, using methods that were deployed to great effect in the U.K. A federal trial earlier this year—perhaps the most important trial ever held involving animal-rights extremism—put the group's methods on full display.

Many of SHAC's efforts targeted HLS directly. An electronic attack in 2002, for instance, caused the HLS server to overload. But other confrontations involved HLS employees away from work: cars vandalized in driveways, rocks tossed through the windows of homes, and graffiti messages such as "PUPPY KILLER" spray-painted on houses. Descriptions of these incidents were dutifully posted on SHAC's own website, often with an unnerving sense of glee. After a tire-slashing visit to the home of one HLS

employee, for example, the SHACtivists seemed pleased that "his wife is reportedly on the brink of a nervous breakdown and divorce." These messages were meant to generate publicity, build a sense of momentum, and serve as models for activists spread across the country. In Britain, one top HLS employee was attacked by a group of hooded men wielding ax handles. "It's only a matter of time before it happens in the United States," warns Frankie Trull, head of the Foundation for Biomedical Research. "Everything they do over there eventually comes over here."

Intimidating employees in their private lives places pressure on HLS itself. But SHAC's harassment didn't stop with HLS employees. They also engaged in "tertiary targeting"—i.e., taking aim at companies with ties to HLS, plus their workers. Dozens of firms decided that doing business with HLS simply wasn't worth it. Deloitte & Touche, which had audited the HLS books, ended its relationship. Lawn gardeners quit. Even a security company that provided services to HLS succumbed to the abuse.

SHAC's methods certainly can be menacing, as transcripts from the trial make clear. One of SHAC's main targets was Marsh, a company that sold insurance to HLS. There was a smoke-bomb attack at an office in Seattle, forcing the evacuation of a high-rise building. In San Antonio, SHAC members glued the locks to a Marsh office and plastered the windows and doors of the building with pictures of a mutilated dog. Once they even stormed inside, screaming threats: "You have the blood of death on your hands! . . . We know where you live! You cannot sleep at night! We will find you!"

And they made good on these threats. Marsh employees were repeatedly harassed at home. There were late-night phone calls: "Are you scared? Do you think the puppies should be scared?" Other calls were more menacing: "We know where you live. You shouldn't sleep at night. You shouldn't rest until the puppies rest." Marion Harlos, who was managing director for Marsh in San Antonio, said that people went through her mail, ordered magazine subscriptions in her name, and rang her doorbell and dashed off in a kind of never-ending Devil's Night. Sometimes protesters would gather in front of her house, banging drums and hollering into megaphones. "They proceeded to parade the neighborhood, shout my name, that of my children," she said. "I was petrified. I was petrified for my children." The kids were kept indoors: "We did not know what was going to take place. Would someone be in the front yard? Would someone be in the back yard? Would someone come up and talk to them? Would someone try and take them?" To make a bad situation even worse, a neighbor threatened to sue Harlos, claiming that the ongoing presence of protesters was hurting property values. Harlos eventually moved.

Sally Dillenback, a Marsh employee in

Dallas, had a similarly harrowing experience. A SHAC website published private information, some of it probably obtained by going through her trash: her home address, her car's license-plate number, and even her auto-insurance policy number. Most unsettling, however, was the information about her children: their names, the names of their schools and teachers, and descriptions of their after-school activities. "I felt that my family might be threatened with that kind of information being posted," she testified. The activists certainly didn't leave her alone; they plastered pictures on the side of her house, her mailbox, and her sidewalk. A SHAC website described the strategy: "Let the stickers serve to remind Marsh employees and their neighbors that their homes are paid for in the blood, the blood of innocent animals." On other occasions, animal-rights radicals held protests outside her home with drums and bullhorns. They followed her to church. The scariest moment may have been when Dillenback read an e-mail: "It asked how I would feel if they cut open my son . . . and filled him with poison the way that they, Huntingdon, [were] doing to animals." Her husband bought a semi-automatic shotgun, even though Mrs. Dillenback doesn't like guns: "He was wanting to protect the family."

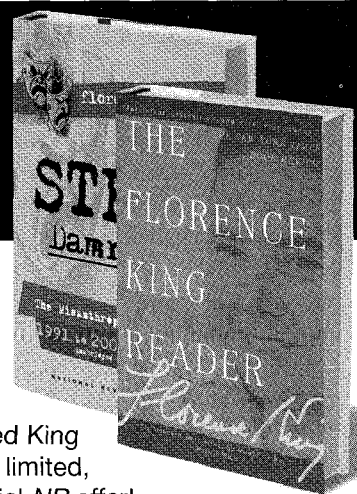
PUNDITS IN BLACK SKI MASKS

Marsh employees were by no means the only tertiary victims of abuse. Two bombs went off at a California office of Chiron, a biotech company. Nobody was hurt, but the second explosion was delayed—a tactic sometimes used by terrorists to kill first respon-

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ders. Workers at GlaxoSmithKline, a pharmaceutical company, also had their windows smashed and mail stolen. In one case, SHAC posted information about the spouse of a GSK employee who was undergoing treatment for alcoholism. Another employee was summoned to the Baltimore morgue to identify a dead relative—but when she arrived, she learned the call was a hoax.

Sometimes, the connections between SHAC targets and HLS were so tenuous as to be almost nonexistent. Elaine Perna, a housewife who is married to an executive who retired from the Bank of New York—another company with ties to HLS—confronted SHAC when protesters appeared on her porch. “When I opened the door, they were yelling at me through the bullhorn. One spat at my face through the screen and yelled obscenities at me, about me, about my husband.” A defense lawyer’s attempt to minimize the incident—“All Ms. Gazzola did was she screamed through the bullhorn, didn’t she?”—irritated Perna: “They were yelling at me through a bullhorn, they were calling me effing this and my husband effing that and spitting in my face through a screen. Now, if you think that ‘that’s all,’ you know, you can call it ‘that’s all.’ But to me, it wasn’t ‘that’s all.’” The mayhem didn’t stop until the police arrived.

On March 2, a jury convicted six members of SHAC (at press time, sentencing had not yet occurred). This is an important victory, but animal-rights extremism isn’t going away—groups such as Hugs for Puppies and Win Animal Rights are now on the scene, continuing their perverse crusade. They certainly don’t lack for true believers. In Senate testimony last fall, Jerry Vlasak of the North American Animal Liberation Press Office announced that violence against HLS was “extensional self-defense” in behalf of “non-human animals.” Recently, a mysterious full-page advertisement appeared in the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. It featured the image of a man in a black ski mask, alongside the words “I Control Wall Street” and a short account of the NYSE fiasco. “Nobody knows who paid for it,” says Trull. One theory proposes that a group of institutional investors are responsible; another claims that it’s a backhanded attempt by animal-rights activists to raise anxieties even further. HLS still isn’t listed.

Several members of Congress have tried to address this species of domestic terrorism by proposing legislation that would toughen the Animal Enterprise Protection Act, a law that was passed before the advent of “tertiary targeting.” At the recent trial, prosecutors secured convictions against SHAC only because they were able to rely on anti-stalking laws. “They had to scour the federal code, looking for violations,” says Brent McIntosh, a deputy assistant attorney general at the Department of Justice. “This is an enormous, surreptitious, and interstate conspiracy. We need to strengthen laws against it.” Bills to do so have been introduced in both the House and the Senate, but a crowded legislative calendar probably means they won’t be debated until a new Congress convenes next year.

The stakes are high. “Five years from now, we don’t want to count up another \$100 million in losses,” says the FBI’s Lewis. That’s true, although the real costs of animal-rights terrorism aren’t really quantifiable: They come in the form of medical discoveries that are delayed or never made, products that aren’t approved, and careers that aren’t started. Whatever the real price tag, one thing is certain: Each time an animal-rights terrorist wins, people lose.

NR

■ CULTURE WATCH II

Pope Dan I

The author of *The Da Vinci Code* shepherds a new religion

MICHAEL NOVAK

THE *Da Vinci Code*, book and movie, gloats about bringing down the Christian Church. But what does the author, Dan Brown, dream of to fill its place?

The underlying code beneath *The Da Vinci Code* bursts to the surface from Chapter 55 on. If you didn’t grasp it there, you will find it in Brown’s extensive written testimony for his court case in London on charges of plagiarism. There he is forced to reveal how he came to each layer of his book’s code, especially the “big idea” around which his story was constructed.

The son of a math professor at Phillips Exeter Academy, Brown has always loved cryptic codes and holiday treasure hunts, and learned from a single art course in Spain to love complicated Renaissance paintings. Since he is profoundly ignorant of pre-Reformation history, there is much about the past that he encounters naïvely. He says he has always been fascinated by secret societies, out-of-the-way histories, and alternative accounts of the way things are. His heart is attuned to the occult and the symbolic and the “gnostic.” By this last term is meant true knowledge attained by a secretive elite, best expressed through ritual, symbol, verse, and the language of mystery. Gnosis is a knowledge impenetrable by the uninitiated—Brown’s conspirators call them “virgins.”

So what is the point of Brown’s new religion?

SECRETS GALORE

“I’ll tell you what happens if the documents get out,” the BBC-voiced character Leigh Teabing says in the novel. “The Vatican faces a crisis of faith unprecedented in its two-millennium history.” These yet-unseen documents are believed to show that Jesus was a mortal man, who married Mary Magdalene and had a child by her. Later, Magdalene fled to France, where the descendants of Jesus gave rise to the Merovingian line of kings. Later descendants have always been in peril from the Church, hidden from sight and well protected by a highly organized, centuries-old conspiracy. Why so much protection? Mary Magdalene “carried with her a secret so powerful that, if revealed, it threatened to devastate the very foundation of Christianity. . . . This is the woman who singlehandedly could crumble the Church.”

All of which seems pretty odd. Brown says he is a Protestant, was even sent once to a Bible summer camp. But his fantasy is so contrary to the Biblical text that it does far more to undermine the

Mr. Novak holds the George Frederick Jewett Chair at the American Enterprise Institute. His latest book, with his daughter Jana, is *Washington’s God*.

Bible-based evangelical churches than the Catholic Church. Because it is contrary to all Biblical and other evidence, the yarn offends Catholic intellect, but does not really undermine Catholic theology. A Messiah, even an incarnate Son of God, who married and had children would reinforce Christian teaching about the sacrament of marriage, and the goodness, joy, fruitfulness, and holiness of sex within the sacramental bond. Of course, it would also raise complicated questions about bloodlines, etc., as the Brown yarn does. It was fortunate for the United States that George Washington had no direct heirs to sully his heritage; much more so, it is a blessing for the Christian Church that Jesus was childless.

But Brown has yet more to lay out in his book. "The quest for the Holy Grail is literally the quest to kneel before the bones of Mary Magdalene. A journey to pray at the feet of the outcast one, the lost sacred feminine"—to kneel as in a new religion, a pre-Jewish, pre-Christian religion. Miraculously, Brown keeps for this new religion a characteristic that no other pagan religion ever shared: It is monotheistic, and radiates a powerful unifying truth.

Brown is ambivalent about Judaism. On one hand, his novel says that the beginning of the end for women was the book of Genesis, where God is rendered as male, and Eve is taken from the rib of the male Adam, then described as the temptress of Adam into the original sin. On the other hand, he often praises Judaism over Christianity: The marriage to Magdalene would not shock Jews, because—as a young Jew—Jesus would have to have been married; it would have been offensive to custom not to be.

Brown sees in the star of David with its two intersecting triangles—blade inserted into chalice, the female symbol on top—"the perfect union of male and female . . . Solomon's Seal . . . marking the Holy of Holies, where the male and the female deities—Yahweh and Shekinah—were thought to dwell." Early Judaism, in his view, is a religion of the sacred feminine, honored by holy ritual intercourse behind the curtains of the Temple. (If I may be permitted an interjection: This is a lie, and an especially contemptible one.) For a long time, Brown explains, the Holy Grail was thought to be a chalice—a physical cup, even the cup used by Jesus at the Last Supper—when in fact it is a code for the *shape* of a chalice, an upside-down triangle representing the shape of a woman's womb.

Brown's hero, Professor Langdon, says: "It was man, not God, who created the concept of 'original sin,' whereby Eve tasted of the apple and caused the downfall of the human race. Woman, once the sacred giver of life, was now the enemy." Teabing, the self-proclaimed atheist, chimes in: "This concept of woman as life-bringer was the foundation of ancient religion. Childbirth was mystical and powerful. . . . Genesis tells us that Eve was created from Adam's rib. Woman became an offshoot of man. And a sinful one at that. Genesis was the beginning of the end for the goddess."

"What I mean," Teabing summarizes, "is that almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is false."

The new replacement for Christianity is this "sacred feminine," which points back to a time before the Church turned sex into "a disgusting and sinful act," and indeed back to the pagan era, in which human nature was supposedly better respected, the sacred feminine honored, and sex uninhibited and natural. Nothing is said about the subjection of women in the warrior cultures of pre-Jewish times; Brown's vision is pure Rousseau.

DIVINE MADNESS

While Brown was writing his book, his father observed that its readers would most likely be women. The book, after all, exalts women, shows them to be sacred, goddesses. At this point, Brown's new religion blends with a far older stream of Western gnosticism, called the myth of romantic love.

It was Judaism that first insisted on a strict monogamy, as Christianity would later. Monogamy imposes restraints upon sexuality, female as well as male; and the human being ever since has rebelled at these restraints, imagining a better world in which

sexual consortium is free, natural, spontaneous, as ungoverned as the wind. The myth of romantic love emerged in this spirit. Two major books—*Love in the Western World* by Denis de Rougemont and *The Allegory of Love* by C. S. Lewis—make the point that, compared in significance with the oceanic romantic-love movement, the Protestant Reformation was but a ripple.

For almost three centuries, from 990 to 1250, most of the kings and noblemen of Europe were off to war, in battle after battle against

the Muslims, from which many did not return. Most of the nations and landed estates of Europe were governed by Christian women. (As Henry Adams has written, those were the most feminist ages in history, under the sign of the Virgin and Mother, Maria, Mother of God.) To entertain these lonely women, the troubadours of Spain and France circulated from castle to castle, singing songs of a new type of love: romantic love. This was a "spiritual," almost gnostic love, full of longing but (in song at least) cut short of consummation, often by tragic death. It was a love full of poignancy and heartbreak. It usually involved a threesome: a lonely woman, a husband far away, a handsome man singing or telling of love. In no other literature of the world does an individual look into the eyes of another in quite this way. For lady and troubadour to fulfill their sexual desires would be illicit. Naturally, as was sung of Paolo and Francesca, it sometimes did happen that "that day they read no more."

Stories of romantic love became the dominant theme of Western song, poetry, and story. On one side, woman was celebrated as very nearly a goddess, noble and pure in her chastity, remote but ardently desired. On the other side was her solemn vow of fidelity, and the ironclad fact that her womb was the single path through which her husband might have an heir and



Audrey Tautou as Sophie Neveu in *The Da Vinci Code*

descendants and lineage. Thus, matrimony built around her a wall, as around a lovely garden of roses. Leaping over the wall (sang the poets) nearly always brought tragedy, and also meant the cheapening of all three parties. The one way out of this bind—of marriage vow chafing against romantic desire—is death: preferably before consummation, when passion is at its most intense, a death for love's sake. This is the meaning of that ambivalent maxim *Amor vincit omnia*: Love conquers all. The great passionate tales, from Tristan and Isolde on, are normally tragic tales.

The popularity of these stories demonstrates that the age-old myth of impossible love, the idealization of woman (the sacred feminine), the longing for self-dissolution, and poignant and passionate desire—all the equipment of a new outburst of the ancient gnosis—have an unrelenting power to touch the human soul. Men do constantly seek the Grail, the chalice which is Woman (not necessarily this particular woman whom I know, but the divine woman somewhere beyond, the unearthly woman, the goddess beyond anyone who is merely flesh). This is not falling in love with an individual woman (or man), but falling in love with love. That is why high risk and death seem so much more attractive than the routine of everyday married life. In this myth, marriage is usually described in an evasive sentence, “And they lived happily ever after,” which avoids the daily routine that follows. Judaism and Christianity, in the realism they pose against romantic love, in their “everydayness,” in their restraints and disciplines, have become the enemy of the gnostic imagination.

TRUE LOVE?

The trick to this gnostic form of love is to think of it as a spiritual love, not for this particular woman but for the eternal goddess within, the mystery of femaleness. But of course this gnosticism leads to the grossest, most impersonal forms of sex, and a frantic, oft-repeated search for escape, in order to keep pursuing the eternally elusive Grail. Here is Professor Langdon before a coed class at Harvard, addressing the men: “The next time you find yourself [having sex] with a woman, look in your heart and see if you cannot approach sex as a mystical, spiritual act. Challenge yourself to find that spark of divinity that man can only achieve through union with the sacred feminine.” Brown reports that “the women smiled knowingly, nodding.”

Langdon's sidekick, French policewoman Sophie Neveu, turns out to be the granddaughter of one of the Four Guardians of the secret of the Grail. When she was only eleven, a horrified Sophie witnessed him taking part in the central rite of the ancient/new religion that Brown proposes to put in place of Christian worship. In this rite, twelve men dressed in black and twelve women in white gossamer gowns with golden shoes and golden orbs in their hands, each wearing an androgynous mask (white for the women, black for the men), began a slow, then faster, ritual dance. At the end, one man, naked, lay upon a low couch, on his back—Sophie recognized her grandfather in this position—while one of the women strode across him, and began gyrating, ever so slowly bringing him toward climax. The swaying and the noise grew faster and faster, and at the climactic moment came a reverberating shout.

Professor Langdon, ever the cool symbologist, explains this ritual to Sophie.

Although what she saw probably *looked* like a sex ritual, [it] had nothing to do with eroticism. It was a spiritual act. Historically, intercourse was the act through which male and female experienced God. . . . Physical union with the female remained the sole means through which man could become spiritually complete and ultimately achieve gnosis—knowledge of the divine. . . . By communing with woman, man could achieve a climactic instant, when his mind went totally blank and he could see God. . . . It's important to remember that the ancients' view of sex was entirely opposite from ours today. . . . The ability of the woman to produce life from her womb made her sacred. A god. Intercourse was the revered union of the two halves of the human spirit—male and female—through which the male could find spiritual wholeness and communion with God. What you saw was not about sex, it was about spirituality.

Brown does not tell us why this arrangement should be satisfying to a woman. And it is quite surprising that Sophie, supposedly a sophisticated detective in Paris, does not ask herself: Why is it that the only women in France today who seem to be having enough children to replace themselves are Muslims, and those few Catholics who are still devout churchgoers? The new pagans do not seem to have much regard for the sacredness of fertility. Do secular women actually cherish the sacred feminine, or not?

And, contrary to Brown's fantasy, Christianity is now the fastest growing community in the world. Islam is growing, too. It is secularism that appears to be shrinking.

Of course, Brown is writing fiction, not philosophy. Still, he has tapped into something ancient and deep. In heavily secular, utilitarian societies, it may be that Brown's book will open eyes to powers that are not easily subjected to bureaucratic ordering. It may awaken deep hungers, at first merely romantic/erotic and gnostic, and then for an endless cycle of questions about who we are, under these stars, with the wind upon our faces. But the romantic/erotic and the gnostic do not bear up well under long experience. They rely too much on delusions. They demean real, in-the-flesh, individual women, with all their common sense, faults, particular wants and tastes, and wonderful angularity. They ignore unique persons, in all their imperfection. In all their suffering.

It is not an accident that Judaism and Christianity, with their wise sense of limits and restraints, and their insistence upon monogamy, taught whole centuries of males to treat women with individual dignity, in the mutual choice of love for one another, forever, sacramentally, each to honor, protect, and cherish the other. In no other civilization, of any other religion or secular persuasion, in any other era, have women been treated as individual persons, made in the image of God, called to reflect, choose, and act with creativity.

One of the most sophomoric parts of *The Da Vinci Code* is Brown's patronizing advice to Christians: Well, if that's what you believe, that's true for you; if that's the sort of dependency you need, go right on leaning on it. And get over the idea that Jesus is God.

In other words: *Learn from me, ye Christians, that your faith is in vain. The religion of the Sacred Feminine is the coming attraction.*

Good luck with your new religion, Mr. Brown.

NR

HELP!!!!

HILLARY'S PAST

Like the spot Lady Macbeth
Famously tried to "out,"
Hillary's health history
Keeps tugging at her clout.
Currently, her rhetoric
Re-casts it as a scar
Of the honorable type—
Which is to har-dee-har.

—W. H. VON DREELE



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"Because snakes give me the creeps, that's why."



the long view

ROB LONG

WELCOME TO YOUR AFTERLIFE!

Q: Why am I here exactly?

A: You are here because your work leading al-Qaeda forces in Iraq and your commitment to violent acts of terrorism encountered what we in the trade call “push back” from U.S.-led forces based in Iraq, which in turn led to the dropping of two 500-pound bombs on your “safe house” resulting in your death, and subsequent appearance here, in our Facility.

Q: You’re telling me that the infidel invaders actually got me?

A: We here in the Facility try not to use loaded, judgmental terms. Yes, you were “gotten,” but try, if you can, to shed yourself of the prejudices and categories of your past. Your time here in the Facility will be a lot more enjoyable and life-transforming if you enter into the spirit of open, loving, and all-embracing inquiry.

Q: I didn’t think that heaven was going to be like this.

A: Why don’t we table that one for a moment, if you don’t mind. Are there any other questions?

Q: Okay, I’ve got one. From here, can I see the future?

A: We get that all the time. No, you can’t see the “future,” as you put it. From our perspective, and it’s one that we **STRONGLY ENCOURAGE** you to adopt, there is no quote unquote future to see. As you become more acclimated to the Facility, you’ll realize that

we live here entirely in the present, allowing us to enjoy and savor each moment.

Q: This sounds a little, I don’t know, loosey-goosey.

A: Thank you!

Q: I guess I expected more pageantry, more heavenly majesty, or something.

A: Are you sure you’re not Catholic?

Just kidding! No, but seriously, we try to match the Facility that you experience as closely as we can to the person you once were, but we’re also experimenting with this more austere approach, of the simple, classic waiting room with clean lines and a more Scandinavian design sense. It’s true that some people are expecting a more, I don’t know, Cirque du Soleil-ish type atmosphere, but we here in the Facility have done a great deal of research—we’ve surveyed our members and done focus groups of some key demos—and we feel that the efficiency and simplicity of this system is well worth the temporary letdown you’re feeling.

Q: Where do I go from here?

A: Once your questions are answered, you simply follow the blazing red line along the stone path until you’re greeted by our concierge, who will escort you through the premises and familiarize you with the various offerings of the Facility. Please feel free to ask any additional questions during your tour.

Q: I still can’t believe that I’m dead. I keep thinking that I’ll wake up.

A: This is a perfectly normal reaction to

being killed. But we here in the Facility **RECOMMEND STRONGLY** that you begin to accept the fact that you are dead—absolutely and incontrovertibly—and that you will be here for eternity.

Q: What about my fallen comrades? Will I be able to see them again?

A: Undoubtedly. You will see many of them on your tour, as you pass the Lake of Fire.

Q: Lake of Fire?

A: I mean, the swimming pool.

Q: If you meant “swimming pool,” why did you say “Lake of Fire”?

A: Look, we’re running out of time. There are a lot of people left to deal with. See that line behind you? Are there any other questions I can help you with?

Q: Oh, yeah. One last one. Where are the 72 virgins?

A: Your question no doubt refers to the belief of some people that their faithful devotion will be rewarded in Paradise by the presentation of 72 virgin girls for their sexual delight.

Q: So where are they?

A: You’re not, strictly speaking, in Paradise.

Q: So no sexual delight?

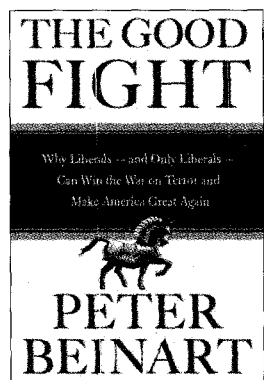
A: On the contrary. There will be an unceasing, unending eternity of sexual delight, with the part of the 72 virgins played by you. The part you expected to play will be played, instead, by an enormous horned demon.

Q: Wait. There must be some mistake. Can I please speak to the—

A: Sorry. We’re out of time. Please move along. Next!



Not Ready Yet



*The Good Fight:
Why Liberals—and Only
Liberals—Can Win the War on
Terror and Make America Great
Again*, by Peter Beinart
(HarperCollins, 304 pp., \$25.95)

RICHARD LOWRY

IN an age of hyper-partisan book marketing a title can be just a way to attract buyers. So at first I didn't take the subtitle of Peter Beinart's new book at face value: "Why Liberals—and Only Liberals—Can Win the War on Terror and Make America Great Again." I figured it was a way to make a book mostly devoted to chastising the Left for not taking the War on Terror seriously enough more palatable for liberal readers. I was wrong; Beinart really means it.

But it is an argument that ultimately he doesn't manage to support, which is why this book—impressive in so many ways—ultimately fails. I want to dwell on the reasons I think it fails, but before I do I should note all that I like about it.

First, I admire Beinart, who recently stepped aside as editor of *The New Republic*, as a writer and a person. He is brilliant and fair-minded. *The Good Fight* is marvelously written and briskly paced, and often subtle and profound. Unlike most deep-think foreign-policy books, it is a pleasure to read.

Beinart is right about much. If the Democrats were, as he advocates, to return to the Trumanesque anti-totalitarian liberalism that held sway in the party from roughly 1947 to 1972, the party and the country would be better off. Beinart excoriates the "doughface" liberals who during the Cold War put anti-imperialism before anti-totalitarianism and demanded total moral purity on the part of the United States, thus opposing any action in the real world to resist Soviet expansionism.

Beinart wants to revive the bygone anti-totalitarian liberalism that, in contrast to Bush's policy today, channeled U.S. action through multilateral institutions; realized the importance of economic development overseas to the anti-totalitarian cause; and acknowledged the fallibility of the U.S., and therefore allowed other countries to restrain our behavior and pursued domestic reforms within the U.S.

When it comes down to it, however, all of this need only mean tweaks to a mainstream-conservative foreign policy, which is why it would be wonderful if the Democrats adopted Beinart's approach and why they probably won't. But Beinart tries to inflate his proposed adjustments into a full-blown doctrine and it is here where he falls down.

Consider Iraq. Beinart supported the war initially but bailed out when our intelligence on WMD turned out to be flawed and the war wasn't as easy as he had hoped. In *The Good Fight*, he tries to make one of his problems with the Bush administration's handling of Iraq—its dismissiveness of the U.N.—into a matter of first importance. But it's just not. Yes, the U.N. has expertise in nation-building. Our troubles in Iraq are nonetheless attributable foremost to the opposition of jihadists and Sunni rejectionists to the new order, and to the primitive state of Iraqi society. Our enemies in Iraq didn't give a damn about the level of U.N. support we had.

East Timor is a nearly ideal intervention from Beinart's perspective. It was admirably multilateral, as we supported an Australian detachment there and the U.N. was heavily involved. But around

the time of the publication date of Beinart's book East Timor began to fall apart, the victim of the forces that have so hurt us in Iraq: violent factionalism and weak governmental institutions. Alas, the U.N. can't miraculously make those go away.

We can try to spin new foreign-policy doctrines around events in Iraq all we like, but a lot of the difficulty there has been a matter of circumstances and historical contingency. For example: If we had had a version of Afghanistan's Karzai in Iraq, a leader with local legitimacy who was an ally and could have been put in power immediately, at least some of our problems would have been averted.

A lot of foreign policy comes down to a matter of touch. The foremost reason not to have invaded Iraq in retrospect would have been that it wasn't as practical as we thought. But it is hard to set down clear doctrinal markers for what's going to work. If Lincoln had issued the Emancipation Proclamation right off the bat and lost several border states from the Union, thus damaging the war effort, he would have been considered a fool for doing it instead of a giant.

Similarly, there was nothing wrong in principle with the Iraq war. If there had been, Beinart surely would have noticed beforehand. It's just that it hasn't yet worked as intended. That is not to minimize Bush's mistake if the war ultimately proves a failure. He then will have been shown to lack the intuition and prudence any successful wartime leader needs to complement his boldness and resolve, qualities Bush has in buckets.

Even as he regrets supporting the Iraq war, Beinart backs the major pillars of the Bush foreign policy. He supports vigorous American leadership and efforts to change the politics of the Middle East. His dissent from Bush is put in harsh terms, but ultimately doesn't amount to much.

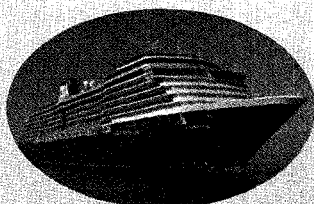
Beinart advocates paying attention to economic development as well as democracy, "freedom as both greater liberty and greater equality of opportunity." This means dramatically reducing the female-illiteracy rate in the Middle East, fostering fundamental economic reform, and helping "develop an independent judiciary, a free press, multiple political parties, and, eventually, free elections, so Muslims can express their

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gone on three or four of our very *bon voyages*!) know, our trips are remarkable events, marked by scintillating political shoptalk, wonderful socializing, intimate dining with our editors and speakers, making new friends, the rekindling of old friendships—and, of course, grand cruising. That's what's in store for you on the **National Review 2006 Post-Election Mexico Cruise**.

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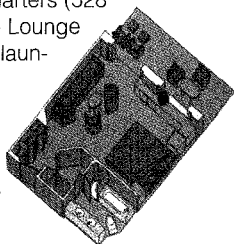
DAY/DATE	PORT	ARRIVE	DEPART	SPECIAL EVENT
SAT/Nov. 11	San Diego, CA		5:00 PM	evening cocktail reception
SUN/Nov. 12	AT SEA			morning/afternoon seminars evening religious services
MON/Nov. 13	Cabo San Lucas (Mexico)	8:00 AM	6:00 PM	late-night smoker
TUES/Nov. 14	Mazatlan	8:00 AM	6:00 PM	
WED/Nov. 15	Puerto Vallarta	8:00 AM	11:00 PM	evening cocktail reception
THURS/Nov. 16	AT SEA			morning/afternoon seminars late-night smoker
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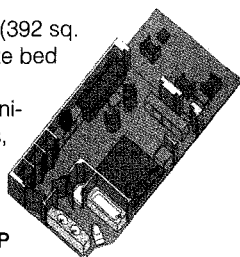
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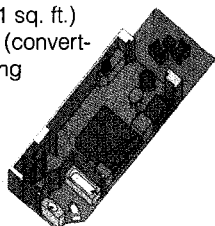
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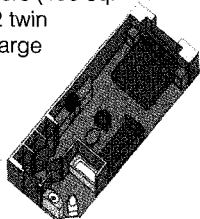
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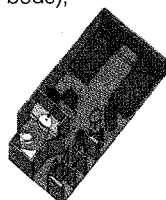
LARGE OCEAN VIEW Comfortable quarters (190 sq. ft.) features queen-size bed (convertible to 2 twin beds), bathtub with shower, sitting area, tv, large ocean-view windows.



Category D

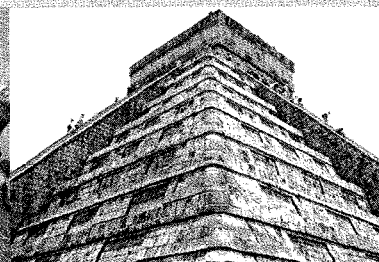
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grievances without turning to violence."

How does Beinart propose to do all this? He advocates a new Marshall Plan for the Middle East. This is a form of fetishizing the past: The Marshall Plan worked 60 years ago, so let's try another one now. He calls for funding any proposed reform in the Arab world, no strings attached: "The only conditions would be that Arab countries themselves develop a plan that enjoys clear political support, conforms to broad democratic and market principles, and is completely transparent." Oh, is that all?

If Arab governments were willing to come up with such plans we wouldn't have a Middle Eastern problem in the first place. We are already pouring massive aid into the broader Middle East. Egypt gets \$2 billion a year. Pakistan recently has gotten as much as \$1 billion a year. The Marshall Plan was an inspiring success, but is exceptional in the history of foreign aid, which has a way of always finding its way down the rathole.

Beinart has several other themes. He calls for a more nuanced view of America's goodness. Here he is absurd, writing that "liberals reject the Right's claim that American actions, simply by virtue of being American, are beyond moral judgment." That is an indefensible sentence. How many conservatives argued that sexually humiliating prisoners at Abu Ghraib was acceptable because Americans did it?

Also, the notion of a conservative belief in the moral infallibility of America—an obsession of Beinart's—is misplaced coming only a few years after conservatives were denouncing America's corruption during the Clinton impeachment controversy. It also is strange coming from the former editor of a magazine dripping with contempt for Christian conservatives who have moral objections to American culture.

Beinart's emphasis on moral nuance is part of the reason he advocates a greater reliance on multilateral institutions and the U.N.: They might know better than we, given our moral failings. This is fine—when it's possible. Let's look back

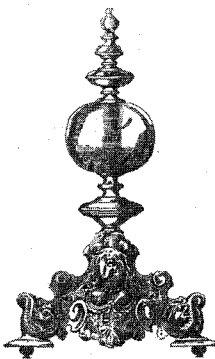
to Iraq. What do you do if the U.N. is, as it often is, being terminally recalcitrant? If NATO is deadlocked by an ally, France, acting in bad faith? If the regional multilateral organization is the diseased Arab League? Beinart's answer three years ago was, "Invade anyway!"

His answer now is, "Don't do it," but that can't be the right call in every instance. *The New Republic* wrote a scathing editorial a few weeks ago attacking as moral idiots anyone who wants to work through the U.N. or the African Union to end the genocide in Darfur. Which goes to show that multilateralism is indeed sometimes nothing more than an obstacle to effective action, exactly as the Bushies thought it was prior to Iraq. We are back to the matter of touch.

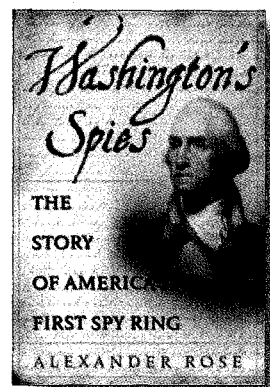
Also, unless it is carefully hedged, the argument that Bush is insufficiently multilateral can be a straw man. You can certainly argue that he was too dismissive of allies going into Iraq, but Beinart was with him on that. On North Korea, Bush has stood resolutely by the (failed) multilateral six-party talks. On the most important crisis facing his administration besides Iraq, Iranian nukes, he has steadfastly deferred to the EU-3.

Beinart's last grand agenda item is democratic renewal at home. But there is no civil-rights struggle today, of the kind that created the occasion for anti-totalitarian liberalism's greatest domestic triumph. Jim Crow was a blot on the United States, and undermined our moral authority abroad. The post-9/11 airline bailout, which Beinart rails against, didn't provide moral propaganda for our enemies. Nor will, say, reviving American unionism strike a blow against jihadists.

Once you're committed to an aggressive anti-totalitarianism and to transforming the politics of the Middle East—the core of the Bush policy—more economic-aid programs and a greater awareness of our own fallibility and the rest of it are mere garnishes. If they can help effect the broader vision, all the better. But they aren't the main event, to which Beinart is struggling to bring his fellow liberals. This is why, for now, conservatives—and only conservatives—can win the War on Terror. **NR**



Cloak and Founders



*Washington's Spies:
The Story of America's
First Spy Ring,*
by Alexander Rose
(Bantam, 384 pp., \$26)

ARTHUR HERMAN

THE History Channel recently gave us *Washington the Warrior*; thanks to Alexander Rose, we now have *Washington the Spymaster*. This fascinating and carefully crafted book shows us a side of the Father of Our Country that hero-worshippers since Reverend Weems never imagined—and the almost forgotten covert side of the Revolutionary War. We see George Washington advising his agents about invisible ink and encryption pads; brushing letters with a chemical wash to expose secret messages; wondering whether one of his spies might be a double agent; and trying to arrange an exchange of captured spies with the British, as if in a scene from a Hollywood espionage thriller.

Is it so surprising? Alex Rose reminds us that Washington started his military career in secret ops, working as the equivalent of an intelligence officer during the French and Indian War. As supreme commander in the American Revolution, he understood that—in the words of his

Mr. Herman is the author, most recently, of *To Rule the Waves: How the British Navy Shaped the Modern World* (Harper Collins/Perennial).

Celebrate and enjoy!



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books, arts & manners

subordinate Nathaniel Greene—"intelligence is the life of everything in war." (Millennia earlier, Sun Tzu was even blunter: "All warfare is deception.")

Indeed, Washington's first act as commander of the Continental Army was to launch a disinformation campaign. Upon appointment by the Continental Congress, he had been assured that there were 300 barrels of gunpowder waiting for him in Boston. When he arrived in July 1775, he learned that there were only 30—barely enough for one round per soldier. So Washington put it about that he was actually sitting on 1,800 barrels—enough to fight a major war. He knew Loyalist spies in Boston would carry the story back to British headquarters, which they did. The deception convinced General Howe to hold off on attacking Washington's outnumbered troops; and in March 1776, the British army evacuated Boston without firing a shot.

That summer, the theater of war was shifting from Boston to New York City, and Washington desperately needed infor-

mation about British plans. The espionage duel began in earnest. Washington's first agent was to become the most famous, Nathan Hale. But as Rose points out, Hale was probably also the most ineffectual. He never entered into the spirit of the thing; unlike Washington, he couldn't convince himself that espionage was a proper calling for a gentleman. Even his handlers thought Hale too open and honest to make a good spy.

And so the British scooped Hale up almost before he got started, and left him dangling from a tree in what is now Manhattan's East Side—at 3rd Avenue and 66th Street. Nathan Hale's last words (which Rose concludes he never uttered)—"I regret that I have but one life to give for my country"—put him in the pantheon of American revolutionary martyrs. But as an intelligence agent, Hale would have been laughed out of the Aruba Secret Service.

His successors proved a better fit for the business of cloak and dagger. Their story is the heart of Rose's book, and he gives us a compelling portrait of this rogues' gallery of barkeeps, misfits, hypochondriacs, part-time smugglers, and full-time neurotics that will remind every reader of the cast of a John le Carré novel.

Running the show was the taciturn Benjamin Tallmadge, who had been Nathan Hale's classmate at Yale and a captain of dragoons—the era's equivalent of mounted scouts. At first Washington had Tallmadge gather intelligence on British troop movements; but then he set him to work organizing an elaborate network of spies in New York City and across rural Long Island, the famous "Culper Ring." As Washington's "M," Tallmadge recruited the colonial era's James Bonds, men like Abraham Woodhull (a.k.a. "Samuel Culper"), Austin Roe, and Robert Townsend. They were men who lived mainly on the margins of respectable society; men whose eccentric religious beliefs or shady business dealings had already made deceit a daily habit, but who were also committed to the revolutionary cause (although the money Washington paid them didn't hurt, either).

Tallmadge wove these disparate characters into an effective espionage operation, complete with encoded cyphers, invisible ink (Washington introduced Tallmadge to

that subterfuge), and counterintelligence operations against similar Tory spy rings. The risks of being caught were great. General Howe hanged three New York women on suspicion of being spies; American soldiers would string up a man for having a guilty face ("a faithful index of the heart," claimed Gen. Alexander McDougall). All but one of the Culper Ring were bachelors. None were well-to-do; one or two ended up bankrupt after the war. One suspects they felt they had little to lose.

Other interesting rascals pass through Rose's racy narrative, notably William Heron, codename "Hiram," the classic double agent who regularly sold information from his American handler to his British handler, and vice versa; Robert Rogers, organizer of Rogers's Rangers, who was Nathan Hale's captor and interrogator; and British major John André and Benedict Arnold, who together nearly pulled off the espionage coup of the century until they ran afoul of Benjamin Tallmadge.

It was Tallmadge who connected some suspicious maps of West Point—which André had in his possession when he was caught—with Benedict Arnold. If Tallmadge's advice to arrest Arnold immediately had been followed, the general turned traitor would have joined André on the hangman's tree, instead of escaping to die sick and destitute in exile in London. For Washington, Benedict Arnold was—in intelligence terms—The Big One That Got Away. Arnold knew the names of many of Washington's spies operating behind British lines. Washington desperately tried to arrange an exchange of André for Arnold, without success. He even talked to Nathaniel Greene about trying to kidnap Arnold from the British—a "covert operation" worthy of Allen Dulles and E. Howard Hunt.

Fortunately, the Continental Congress didn't subpoena Greene or Tallmadge, to demand, "What did the general know, and when did he know it?" Today, of course, the hanging of Major André would be considered a war crime worthy of impeachment. And Benedict Arnold would be the author of a bestselling memoir detailing how he tried to blow the whistle on George Washington's attempts to undermine our civil liberties—with Alec Baldwin playing him in the movie. **NR**

LEGACY

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The Great Loser



A Godly Hero: The Life of William Jennings Bryan, by Michael Kazin
(Knopf, 400 pp., \$30)

MATTHEW SPALDING

WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN has got to be the greatest loser in American political history. No other major-party nominee has run for president so many times, only to have lost each time by an increasing margin. The 1896 vote was somewhat close, but 1900 was less so and 1908 a trouncing. “We have beaten them to a fizzle,” as Teddy Roosevelt put it. Perhaps this explains why there is so little mention of Bryan in a Democratic pantheon dominated by Woodrow Wilson, FDR, and LBJ. And yet, like Barry Goldwater, this loser led a successful grass-roots insurgency against his party establishment, caused that party to become aligned to a new set of ideas, and laid the groundwork for a major movement that would permanently alter the political landscape.

Still, Bryan’s story is more complicated. Goldwater was affirmed within conservatism; Bryan ultimately met with rejection within his own movement. This makes his part in the development of modern liberalism all the more significant—and much more interesting.

In this fascinating new biography,

Mr. Spalding is director of the B. Kenneth Simon Center for American Studies at the Heritage Foundation.

Georgetown University historian Michael Kazin makes a compelling argument that Bryan “did more than any other man—between the fall of Grover Cleveland and the election of Woodrow Wilson—to transform his party from a bulwark of laissez-faire into the citadel of liberalism we identify with Franklin D. Roosevelt and his ideological descendants.” Kazin’s case is hard to dispute.

By the end of the 1880s, a divide already existed in the Democratic party—between the so-called Bourbon conservatives and a growing number of reformers. Bryan, the son of a staunch Jacksonian Democrat, came to side with the reformers. Shortly after Bryan moved from Illinois to Nebraska to practice law, his eloquence attracted the local party leaders just as the Populists (and their anti-big-business reforms) were becoming significant in state politics.

In 1890, Bryan became only the second Democratic congressman in Nebraska history. He was reelected, but instead of seeking a third term Bryan ran in (and won) a non-binding election for the Senate. The Republicans captured the legislature and appointed someone else.

Bryan embraced the key Populist ideas, but it was his advocacy of “free silver” (the policy of a bimetallic standard for currency rather than a unitary gold standard) that made him a national voice of reform and assured his first presidential nomination. It wasn’t good economics, but made a winning political argument: Financial magnates ruled the country by controlling the money supply, and a silver standard would make currency cheaper and send more money back to the little guy. Bryan famously closed the deal with his dramatic “Cross of Gold” speech at the Democratic convention of 1896.

While losing a national realigning election to William McKinley that year, the Great Commoner traveled 18,000 miles and delivered some 600 speeches to 5 million people, attracting a tremendous and loyal following. In doing so, he popularized and mainstreamed ideas previously rejected out of hand by both political parties. “You are at this hour the hope of the Republic—the central figure of the civilized world,” proclaimed Eugene Debs.

That was because free silver was the leading edge of a whole array of policies—regulation of corporations, tariff reform, an income tax, direct election of senators,

an insurance fund to protect bank depositors—meant to advance social reform. In his 1900 campaign, Bryan emphasized the growing evil of trusts and attacked imperialism. In 1908 (after conservatives captured the Democratic nomination for one last time in 1904), Bryan ran as a full-throttle progressive reformer. While Theodore Roosevelt’s popularity elected his chosen successor, William Howard Taft, Bryan effectively shifted the mantle of progressive reform to the Democratic party.

Significant signs of party revival were already evident by 1908, leading up to the Democratic congressional landslide in 1910. When the Republican party suffered the schism of TR’s Bull Moose party in 1912, the door was opened for the Democrat Woodrow Wilson, who won with Bryan’s endorsement—and with fewer votes than Bryan had garnered in any of his previous defeats. Wilson made Bryan his secretary of state, only to have him resign in protest of Wilson’s increasingly “belligerent” policies.

In capturing the party, Bryan led the Democrats in rejecting the limited-government approach of Andrew Jackson and moving toward a new sort of populism—one more committed to state intervention in behalf of “the people” and against predatory economic interests. The later success of this new-style liberalism would not have been possible without the working coalition forged between rural supporters and the new urban reform vote—a coalition made possible by Bryan’s fusion of populism and progressivism.

Bryan himself was at once more radical and less revolutionary than the progressives. He, too, wanted to nationalize the railroads, legislate a living wage, and enact public financing of political campaigns. Bryan’s philosophy was essentially statist: “The power of the government to protect the people is as complete in time of peace as in time of war. The only question to be decided is whether it is necessary to exercise that power.” Too much for some progressives, this was perfectly compatible with the New Deal—Herbert Hoover once quipped that the New Deal was “Bryanism under new words and methods”—and with the liberalism of today.

It is significant, though, that Bryan was never enamored of the possibility of applying new scientific methods to politics in order to achieve “progress.” (He was, for instance, an old-fashioned racist—as op-

posed to those who, like TR, espoused pseudo-scientific theories of race inferiority.) Bryan wanted to transform the old system into an instrument of the popular will and an agent of reform, but he didn't buy into the progressive theory (advocated by Wilson and Herbert Croly) of a dynamic, evolving state based on scientific knowledge and administrative bureaucracy.

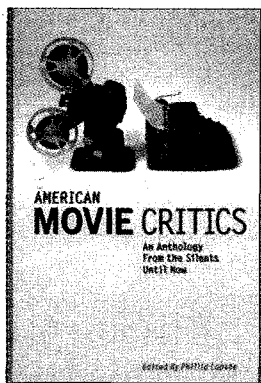
The reason might have something to do with Bryan's lifelong animosity toward Darwinism, which became a crusade in the last part of his public life—and for which liberal historians have never forgiven him. Although Kazin tries to rehabilitate him by claiming he wasn't really a fundamentalist, Bryan was actually quite illiberal: He believed the Bible was unerring and that “there is nothing *unreasonable* about Christianity, and there is nothing *unscientific* about Christianity.” He objected to teaching the theory of evolution. Indeed, he believed public schools should not be allowed to teach “atheism, agnosticism, Darwinism, or any other hypothesis that links man in blood relationship to any other form of life.” In the words of Richard Hofstadter, Bryan “was never a rebel at all . . . He never felt the excitement of intellectual discovery.” A “poor clod,” wrote H. L. Mencken, “deluded by a childish theology.”

Such comments overlook something important: Bryan's opposition to Darwinism encompassed a deep concern about the corrupting influence of materialism and modernism on society and intellectual life. But Kazin's sanguine assessment is just as dismissive: “In retrospect, his anxiety seems irrational.”

In the end, Kazin wants today's liberals to reconsider the early Bryan, and use him as a model of how to combine progressive policies with the rhetoric of liberal religious values. The problem is that class-oriented politics is increasingly unattractive to most Americans, and secular liberalism is inherently skeptical of (if not hostile to) morality and religion: This hardly seems a likely recipe for rebuilding a Democratic majority. Indeed, the stronger advocates for populist reform grounded in faith are to be found in red-state America. If the Great Commoner were around today, he would be supporting intelligent design and non-sectarian prayer in schools; criticizing his party's embrace of abortion on demand; and favoring the constitutional protection of traditional marriage. Now that's a realignment.

NR

Much Ado About Movies



*American Movie Critics:
An Anthology from the
Silents until Now,
edited by Phillip Lopate
(Library of America,
825 pp., \$40)*

TERRY TEACHOUT

FILM was the master medium of the 20th century. Within a few years of its invention, it had supplanted live theater and the novel as the main way in which most people experienced the art of storytelling, and it retains its cultural dominance to this day (though only if you count TV as a species of filmmaking, which you should). It follows, then, that film criticism should by definition be worth reading. Right? Er, well, sometimes. Most of it is in fact flaming hogwash, though Phillip Lopate has held the nonsense to a minimum in his new collection of American film criticism. It isn't perfect—no anthology is—but *American Movie Critics* will likely

Mr. Teachout, the drama critic of the *Wall Street Journal*, reviewed film for *Crisis* from 1998 to 2005. He blogs about the arts at www.TerryTeachout.com.

become the standard collection of its kind, for the most part rightly so.

The Hippocratic Oath of anthologists starts off as follows: *First, don't be dull.* Lopate has steered clear of mere dutifulness, one or two puzzling duds notwithstanding, and he's struck a nice balance between such obligatory-but-deserving inclusions as Manny Farber's "Underground Film" and Robert Warshaw's "The Gangster as Tragic Hero" and the out-of-left-field nuggets that lend savor to any anthology worth reading. Who knew that Cecilia Ager, who reviewed movies for *Variety* and *PM* in the 1930s and '40s, was so wickedly clever? Or that Vincent Canby's never-before-collected *New York Times* reviews would hold up so well? As for his decision to include the entries on Cary Grant and Howard Hawks from David Thomson's indispensable *New Biographical Dictionary of Film*, my only regret is that he didn't throw in Humphrey Bogart while he was at it.

Of course I would have done it all differently, and certain of Lopate's oversights are real disappointments. I was surprised, for instance, to find nothing by Anthony Lane or Joe Morgenstern, and positively staggered by the absence of Charles Thomas Samuels, whose *Mastering the Film* (1977) remains one of the most penetrating books on film to be produced by an American critic. Nor am I quite satisfied with his selections from the '30s and '40s, which too often run to the obvious. (Had Lopate spent a couple of hours trolling through the eight DVD-ROMs that make up *The Complete New Yorker*, for instance, he would have discovered that Harold Ross was publishing smart film criticism long before Pauline Kael.) In addition, *American Movie Critics* contains no index, nor are the essays it reprints accompanied by their original dates of publication, though many—but not all—can be found in the back-of-the-book permissions section. These vexing omissions greatly diminish the usefulness of *American Movie Critics* to the general reader.

Be that as it may, this is Phillip Lopate's book, not mine or anybody else's, and it's mostly a fine one. Even where I take issue with his priorities, I have no trouble appreciating them, which is all you can ask of an anthologist

(except for an index). John Simon, for instance, surely deserves to have been represented by more than two pieces, but had I been the editor of *American Movie Critics*, I would have made sure to include, as Lopate does, his reviews of *The Last Picture Show* and *Chinatown*:

The final question is whether a mystery film, however concerned with moral climate and psychological overtones, can transcend its genre. . . . These people are much more vulnerable than their genre antecedents, which is what ultimately makes for *Chinatown*'s originality and distinction. Still, the hold of the genre is so strong that, even with sensational plot twists kept at a minimum, there simply isn't room enough for full character development—for the richer humanity required by art.

This acute observation might well serve as an epigraph for *American Movie Critics*. Likewise this one: "I should like to inquire why we as the nation that produces the movies should never have developed any sound school of movie criticism." Otis Ferguson, the first working film critic to achieve high distinction, wrote those words 65 years ago, and Lopate cites them in his excellent introduction, asserting in reply that "we have developed a sound school of American movie criticism—thanks to Ferguson himself, James Agee, Robert Warshow, Manny Farber, Parker Tyler, Andrew Sarris, Pauline Kael, and those who have followed in their wake."

Readable as *American Movie Critics* is, I'm not so sure I agree. It strikes me as hugely revealing that the early years of American film criticism failed to produce a George Orwell, by which I mean an essayist of the first rank who left behind a significant body of work in which film is considered not in isolation but as part of the larger world of art and culture. Ferguson and Warshow might well have filled the bill had they lived long enough, but both men died too soon to fully prove themselves, and no one like them has come along in subsequent years (except for John Simon, who is far more specifically aesthetic in his wide-ranging interests than the sort of critic

I have in mind). At their best, Agee, Farber, and Kael wrote wonderfully about film, but do any of their reviews, or those of the other critics included in *American Movie Critics*, really stand up to direct comparison with an essay like Orwell's "Raffles and Miss Blandish" or "Inside the Whale"?

I can't help but wonder whether the problem might be that film is incapable of inspiring such writing. Not the medium itself: A movie like Jean Renoir's *The Rules of the Game* or Kenneth Lonergan's *You Can Count on Me* is as worthy of close critical scrutiny as any great novel or play. But how often do film critics get to write about such works of cinematic art? Commercial movies cost too much to be produced by anyone other than businessmen, and the independently made low-budget films of the past decade, fine though the best of them

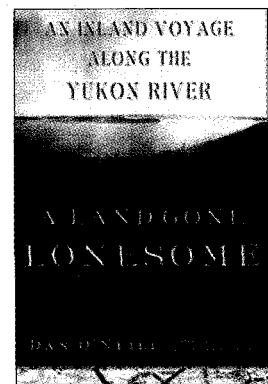
are, have yet to transform the American film industry in the way I (and many other critics) once hoped. I spent the past seven years turning out monthly film reviews, in the course of which I saw and wrote about such superb independent and quasi-independent films as *Election*, *Ghost World*, *The Last Days of Disco*, *Lost in Translation*, *Me and You and Everyone We Know*, *Next Stop*

Wonderland, *Panic*, *The Station Agent*, and *Sunshine State*. Yet by the end of my run I was more than ready to quit, and since I did so I've seen exactly three new movies, only two of which I liked.

Maybe it's just me, but I suspect that the ease with which I set aside my professional passion for film is more than just a quirk. I find it no less revealing, for instance, that Lopate cites with seeming approval David Denby's reference to "that tone of fond exasperation which we recognize as the sound of a movie critic." Can you imagine any truly serious critic making so chummy, even condescending a remark about opera or painting? It speaks volumes about the inescapable limitations of genre-bound commercial films as works of art and objects of criticism. For once, it seems, Shakespeare was wrong: When it comes to the movies, the fault is not in ourselves, but in our stars.

NR

Enshrining The Trees



A Land Gone Lonesome: An Inland Voyage along the Yukon River, by Dan O'Neill (Counterpoint, 272 pp., \$24.95)

JOHN R. COYNE JR.

IN Dan O'Neill's previous book, *The Last Giant of Beringia: The Mystery of the Bering Land Bridge*, he wrote of the plants and animals that during the last Ice Age migrated eastward across the land bridge, and of the people—apparently the first Americans—who followed the animals from Asia into Alaska and a new continent, and whose "discovery and colonization of half the earth is one of the great accomplishments in human history."

Today, however, he tells us in *A Land Gone Lonesome*, the historical process is running in the other direction. Owing to the complex and often contradictory federal laws and regulations enforced by the National Park Service and other agencies, the depopulation of rural subsistence-living Alaska is well under way.

It was in part to capture a fast disappearing way of life that O'Neill set out in his square-backed canoe to travel the Yukon River, from Dawson City in Canada's Yukon Territory to Circle City in Alaska. At one point in his trip, he listens to the sound of an outboard motor on the

Mr. Coyne, a longtime NR contributor and former White House speechwriter, studied and taught at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks.

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river. As it passes his camp, he thinks:

I am in his past. But he remains in my present because I can hear him still. . . . In another moment I cannot distinguish the pulse of the [outboard] from the general thrum of the living world. The whine disintegrates into the air, though for a moment I can reassemble it more or less in my memory. It is a shadow of a perception, and it begins at once to fade like a photograph left in the sun. Unless one makes a record.

That is precisely what O'Neill sets out to do, and his record is a rich one. The Yukon has served as a highway for a steady stream of travelers, hunters, trappers, and people staking out areas for building cabins and fish camps. There were men on the run, outlaws, tenderfeet, seekers after solitude and total self-sufficiency, men following gold and minerals, and men like O'Neill, both participant and observer.

At the end of each day, O'Neill pulls his canoe in to make camp at one of the sites along the river—a ruined cabin, an abandoned fish camp, a ghost town, a side river, each locale with its own story and cast of characters—and reconstructs their human and natural histories, frequently

drawing on anecdotes and the recollections of river people who have passed them down. "Stories," says O'Neill, "are the original record of human history in this place."

There are good stories here, well told—a gunfight, a vividly reconstructed grizzly attack, a newcomer freezing to death, and a wonderful variation on the old disappearing-cremation-ashes story, this one involving an Alaskan legend named Dick Cook, the bane of federal land-use enforcers and the personification of everything people either love or detest about men who live on the land and insist loudly on their absolute right to do so. (Cook managed to drown—twice.) And there are stories of good men and good women who were tested and emerged better people.

O'Neill does all this in clear, crisp, and evocative prose, with the reader able to see, hear, and sometimes even smell the characters. As in his earlier books, O'Neill also demonstrates a rare gift for describing in quick and imaginative prose natural phenomena and scientific or mechanical processes—the properties of glaciers and how they move; the operations of a dredge; and the many different ways there are to die when plunged suddenly into icy water.

At most stops, after he has set up camp, finished his meal (heavy on moose sausage), and cleaned his mess gear, he sits for a while, sometimes with what he calls "dessert's dessert: a ration of ardent spirits," looks out over the country and the colors, and shows us what he sees as he paints with words:

As the sun goes down, the sky first ambers, then concentrates into an intense, blazing orange. Below, the river plays out, shining like a satin ribbon unreeling. It absolutely glows. It is as if it has absorbed light all day and now begins to fluoresce. [The blue is] like the blue of the noon sky but mixed with mercury and electrified. A color intrinsically agreeable to the human heart, and the more exquisite for being the chromatic opposite of the neon-orange. Sometimes when my concentration wanders, the scene slips into two dimensions. A composition blocked into thirds. Across the middle, a black band—the hills—without depth or texture. A jagged black crack between the two luminous regions, sky and water. An allegory of night: the dark between the day that's done and the day that's coming.

The land will retain its great beauty. But whether human beings will continue to have a place in it is an open question. Not long ago, it was still possible to stake out a homestead in Alaska. But no longer. Today, because of the Prudhoe Bay oil fields, the certainty of future oil discoveries, and great mineral wealth, over against the almost religious fervor with which environmentalists oppose any Alaskan development whatsoever, land-use issues tend to dominate Alaskan politics. But one thing seems to unite all factions: opposition to those people who would have once been called pioneers, frontiersmen, and homesteaders, but are now called squatters, or worse.

The neo-environmentalists—in the words of the Wilderness Act of 1964, the movement's seminal document—dream of "an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." The state and the feds fear the political clout of these environmentalists. Business interests don't lose sleep over the environmental issues, but they want minerals and profits. Neither business nor government is particularly welcoming of unwashed squatters; so government agencies are politically pressured to act as agents of eviction.

O'Neill says there needs to be a counter-pressure: "These stories of the river people [suggest] that it is a thing of value when frontiersmen and women are living out in the country—of value to people themselves, as they grow in courage and competence; of value to the land, as their deep local knowledge informs our stewardship; of value to our culture, as their residency conserves nearly extinct pioneering ideals." But today, within the whole two-and-a-half million acres of the Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve and along the Yukon, where O'Neill's river people thrived, "there is not a single person holding a permit to live in a cabin. . . . Resident subsistence activities are now, finally, eliminated from the reserve."

But O'Neill will not accept this as the end of the story, and he closes his book with strong and positive recommendations for the National Park Service. But the sense of loss cuts deep. "For now," he writes, "the land is lonesome by decree, artificially empty as if, to enshrine the trees, we banished the birds." **NR**

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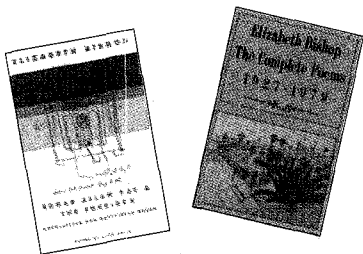
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Decorum vs. Terror



*Edgar Allan Poe & The Juke-Box:
Uncollected Poems, Drafts,
and Fragments*, by Elizabeth Bishop
(Farrar, Straus and Giroux,
392 pp., \$30)

The Complete Poems 1927-1979, by
Elizabeth Bishop (Farrar, Straus and
Giroux, 287 pp., \$15)

JEFFREY HART

THE controversy surrounding the appearance of the new Elizabeth Bishop volume is easily disposed of. Certainly, the poet herself would have been mortified by its publication: drafts, fragments, things that might have been worked up into finished poems. Her craftsmanship meticulous, it often took her years to complete a poem. But yes, we are very glad to have the new book, as we would be for anything like it from a great poet. In fact the new volume contains only a single "uncollected poem"—a finished poem, that is—and it's about the shelter she found in the great love of her life, the Brazilian woman Lota de Macedo Soares. (It does not appear in *The Complete Poems 1927-1979*—which is, by the way, the best \$15 you will ever spend.) An excerpt:

It is marvelous to wake up together
At the same minute; marvelous to hear
The rain begin suddenly all over the
roof,
To feel the air suddenly clear
As if electricity had passed through it
From a black mesh of wires in the sky.
All over the roof the rain hisses,
And below, the light falling of
kisses. . . .

And we imagine dreamily
How the whole house caught in a
birdcage of lightning
Would be quite delightful rather than
frightening.

This fine poem remained unpublished until now, probably because of its lesbian subject, though it is of universal application. In Lota, Bishop found (temporary) safety from some very large matters. Her father died when she was an infant; her mother was confined to an insane asylum when she was four and she lived with relatives; while she was at Vassar her boyfriend committed suicide when she refused to marry him, and sent her a postcard that said, "Go to hell Elizabeth." She became an alcoholic and for 18 years an expatriate in Brazil, where she met Lota—who later killed herself by overdosing on tranquilizers in Bishop's apartment. As the poet James Merrill observed, Bishop spent her life impersonating an ordinary woman. Her emotions were anything but ordinary. Bereft when Lota died, she does not mention her at all in the elegy "Crusoe in England," but her expression of loneliness stays in the mind: "The sun set in the sea; the same odd sun rose from the

sea, / and there was one of it and one of me."

In "The Bite," vocabulary and metaphor carry the emotional meaning of what is much more than mere description: "At low tide like this how sheer the water is. / White, crumbling ribs of marl protrude and glare / And the boats are dry, the pilings dry as matches." So few words, so much menace packed in them.

In "Sandpiper," the small bird running on the hard sand just ahead of the inward-sweeping sea amounts to a representation of the poet:

The world is a mist. And then the world is
minute and vast and clear. The tide
is higher or lower. He couldn't tell you
which.
His beak is focussed; he is preoccupied,

looking for something, something,
something.
Poor bird, he is obsessed!
The millions of grains are black, white,
tan, and gray
Mixed with quartz grains, rose and
amethyst.

Minutely seen, and full of meaning. "The world is a mist"—the tiny bird's world, of course, with mist rising from the wave crashing and flowing up the sand. But this is the poet's world too, and, yes, ours. Suddenly there occurs a clarification: That wave is dangerous. The bird's beak is focused, he is preoccupied. "The millions of grains are black, white, tan, and gray, / Mixed with quartz grains, rose and amethyst." If we were not preoccupied . . . would we scream?

Elizabeth Bishop's reputation as the most reticent and meticulous of poets is deserved, but that is only part of the story. True, she doesn't come on as strong as the insistent and mysterious shaman who tells us that "April is the cruelest month, breeding / Lilacs out of the dead land," nor does she provide the hortatory eloquence of "Rage, rage against the dying of the light." But she does articulate a courageous bargain with life—refusing disclosure while expressing the energies of the undisclosed terror and insisting that great poetry is more important than disaster, even as the silent scream can be heard.

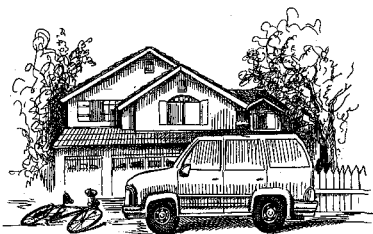
NR

MOUNTAIN TRAIL

The shop was a hole in the wall between
An insurance agency with the lights
Out and a diner with two customers.
It sold small items from the Orient
Made of bamboo sticks and paper, with bits
Of metal like coins, scrolls, and scented
Candles. Next to the door, lighted from
Above, was an image of the Virgin Mary,
On rice paper, nearly the size of a
Movie poster. In a way, how she got there
Is as easy to understand as the
Placement of two thumb tacks. Yet the route
May have been a missionary's down some
Misty mountain trail a generation ago,
Or via some obscure priest on a cable
Channel in the predawn hours and quite
Recently, or even directly, in a way
Not apparent, from the church nearby,
High and quiet, where words and worship
Are hushed, with no window over
The unsullied world.

—WILLIAM W. RUNYEON

Dear Editor



JOHN DERBYSHIRE

Is there any genre of literary endeavor lower—less significant, less regarded, more ephemeral—than the Letter to the Editor? Or any better illustration of the truth, first noted by one of the Roman authors, that writing is neither an art nor a science, but a disease? A person would indeed have to be suffering from some sort of malady to be so hungry for distinction as to give over half an hour to compose a letter, on a topic of public interest, addressed to a stranger, in the faint hope that it might see print, squinched into some newspaper between the thundering unsigned editorials and the dry ruminations of public intellectuals, or in the shadowy ad-fringed ditch between some magazine's contents page and the warm-up features.

This low and self-indulgent art form boasts few masterpieces, and even those have the miniature character of heads carved on cherry-stones. A personal favorite of mine is the one sent to the *London Times* in February 1959, signed jointly by Earl Russell, a.k.a. Bertrand Russell, the philosopher and gadfly, and Lord Russell of Liverpool, a jurist who had helped prosecute the Nazi defendants at Nuremberg. After the latter's book *The Scourge of the Swastika* became a best-seller, people started getting the two aristocratic Russells mixed up, leading to the joint letter, whose text read, in its entirety: "In order to discourage confusions which have been constantly occurring, we beg herewith to state that neither of us is the other." There you have a perfect letter to the editor: memorable, socially useful, and brief.

I was attracted to the letters columns of my family's morning newspaper from an early age. That paper was Hugh

Cudlipp's *Daily Mirror*, the greatest success in postwar British tabloid journalism. The letters column was a folksy affair purportedly managed by a pair of elderly gentlemen called the Old Codgers, who in practice were of course a single person, that person being whichever *Mirror* staff member could be found nothing better to do. That was so in Fleet Street at any rate. Staff at the separately printed northern edition of the *Mirror* used to just make up the letters, a fact sufficiently well-known to worker bees of the British press to cause much mirth when Hugh Cudlipp dropped in on the *Mirror*'s Manchester office one day to congratulate John Flint, the night news editor, on the fine natural sense of humor displayed by the paper's northern readers.

At any rate, I quickly got attached to the Old Codgers. They practiced a prewar style of courtesy, referring to male readers as "Sir" and females as "Ma'am." They had a nice line in odd believe-it-or-not facts, and patient answers to colorfully silly questions from readers. In my preteen arrogance I even submitted a letter to them—something about the speed of light, I think it was—but the letters editor did not see fit to publish it. That particular incarnation of the Old Codgers was probably the legendary reporter Brian McConnell, who some years later took a bullet in the chest for Princess Anne when a lunatic attempted to kidnap her. (He recovered, and was awarded a medal by the Queen in person.)

In due course that preteen arrogance matured into a full-blown adolescent self-regard. I fell in with a group of coevals who, like me, fancied their intellects much too big to be contained by the sleepy provincial town we lived in. That town's own evening daily was the *Chronicle and Echo*, which my mother took for what she called the "hatched, matched, and dispatched" (i.e., the paper's recording of local births, marriages, and deaths). The paper had a letters column, and my friends and I vied with one another to sabotage it with subversive entries like:

Dear Sir,

Why does your newspaper publish letters from readers who will not permit their names to be shown, or who hide their identities behind pseudonyms? If a writer

is too cowardly to attach his name to his opinions, his letter ought not be published.

Yours faithfully,
"Fearless Fred"

The summit of my career as a writer of letters to the editor, though, came in the mid-1990s, when I held an undemanding job in New York City. I tried the *Times*, but they were printing only 60 or so of the 1,500 letters they received each week. They printed a lot of letters from notables—from panjandrums of politics, commerce, or academe—crowding out us lesser mortals. Further, they verified your identity by calling the phone number you gave them. This last safeguard could be finessed with a little ingenuity—my office had plenty of outside lines—but it cramped my style.

Fortunately I found that the *New York Post* printed a higher proportion than the *Times* of readers' letters, had fairly predictable criteria for publication, and did not call to verify letter-writers' identities. Before long I was being published with fair regularity in the *Post* under five or six pseudonyms, each one with a made-up address in one of New York's five boroughs, each written or typed on a different kind of letter paper, with a different-size envelope, mailed from a different location. I am ashamed to say I spent many hours of my employer's time fiddling with word-processor fonts and paper sizes, and practicing different signatures, in an effort to present my multiple personalities as convincingly as possible to the letters editor of the *New York Post*.

All that work met with considerable success. I managed to get several heated exchanges going with myself in the letters columns of the *Post*, one personality vigorously contradicting another. Nor was this my only outlet. I may be the only person ever to have published a sonnet in the *Wall Street Journal* letters section (1/9/96). Strangely, I do not think I ever had a letter in *NATIONAL REVIEW*, in spite of having been a subscriber continuously since the mid-1970s. By the late 1990s I had anyway been hired in to write editorial snippets here. This new employment quenched my thirst for one-paragraph opinionating, and I abandoned my epistolary adventures. This probably saved me from acute schizophrenia, and the *New York Post* from a letters column entirely the product of a single fevered brain.

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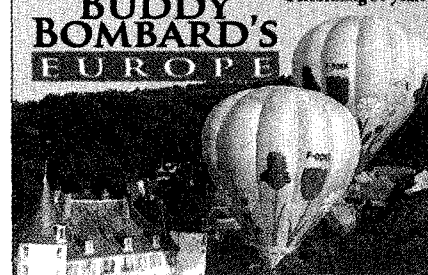
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on the right

WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

The President Says It Again

NEW YORK, MAY 30

THE broad shoulders of a national election loom just ahead. It is traditional to deplore elections as distracting from courses charted by celestial coordinates. Sure; okay; much of this is true. But elections also ratify, or fail to do so, politicians who have set forth national policy.

There are two great issues on which November 2006 will pronounce. The first has to do with spending. The voter reminds himself that all money bills, by constitutional direction, have to originate in the House of Representatives. Is he then going to punish for wild spending whatever incumbent is within his reach? Perhaps the voters will be permissive with Congress—on the grounds that the president, after all, was there with a veto power he never exercised. Will they satisfy themselves with sending the legislators back for another session and storing up their resentment to be used against the GOP in 2008?

Overhanging all other concerns is the war in Iraq. That, the voter will tell himself, is the work of one man: the outgoing president. It is not easy to punish a lame duck, but one way is to bring in as his successor a chief executive from the other political party. So that even 2 1/2 years before Election Day 2008, party strategists are thinking about Iraq.

Certainly George Bush is doing so. At West Point on May 27, he spoke to the graduating class, the first class to have matriculated at the academy after September 11.

There was not a hint of retrenchment on the military, the historical, or the ideological front. Mr. Bush reiterated the line set down by Truman. "He told the Congress: 'It must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed

minorities or by outside pressures.'"

Mr. Bush cited the early costs of this doctrine. "More than 54,000 Americans gave their lives in Korea. Yet, in the end, Communist forces were pushed back to the 38th Parallel—and the freedom of South Korea was secure." What about North Korea?

Never mind. "The military footprint Truman established on two continents has remained virtually unchanged to this day, and has served as the foundation for security in Europe and in the Pacific."

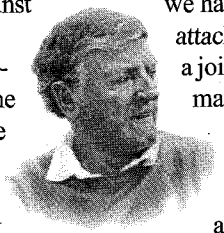
The historical perspective is interesting. "In the Cold War, we deterred Soviet aggression through a policy of mutually assured destruction. Unlike the Soviet Union, the terrorist enemies we face today hide in caves and shadows—and emerge to attack free nations from within. . . . They cannot be deterred—but they will be defeated. America will fight the terrorists on every battlefield, and we will not rest until this threat to our country has been removed."

Is this just soldier-talk? Soldier-talk, graduation-time?

Mr. Bush is manifestly a true believer in the rhetoric he uses. "In this new war, we have set a clear doctrine. After the attacks of September 11th, I told a joint session of Congress: America makes no distinction between the terrorists and the countries that harbor them. If you harbor a terrorist, you are just as guilty as the terrorists and you're an enemy of the United States of America.

In the months that followed, I also made clear the principles that will guide us in this new war: America will not wait to be attacked again. We will confront threats before they fully materialize. We will stay on the offense against the terrorists, fighting them abroad so we do not have to face them here at home."

The graduating cadets cheered lustily, and after his speech the president shook the hands individually of 860 young men and women who will be going off to war. They have confidence in their leadership, though some may have wondered why, in our war against terrorists, we have not yet succeeded in executing Saddam Hussein.



Big Day at New Paltz

NEW YORK, JUNE 2

ARTHUR SULZBERGER JR., the publisher of the *New York Times*, is himself in the news. What happened is that the State University of New York at New Paltz invited him to be its commencement speaker. The publisher of the *Times* is ex officio an important person. He is, after all, the dominant figure in the dominant newspaper in the entire world. So newsmongers turned eagerly to his speech, wondering whether it would provide a key to the understanding of world affairs.

The homework Sulzberger did is illuminating. He went back and read "what generations of other commencement speakers had said." If he was thorough in this, that means he read about 30 of my own, though it can't be deduced that from these he learned anything at all. Usually, commencement speakers satisfy themselves with well-composed vapidity.

Years ago I amused myself by using the identical speech at ten different universities, confident that no one in the tallest library stack in the world would detect the repetition. No one did. It was sobering to reflect that I might have been uttering, for the first time, the Sermon on the Mount, and nobody would notice.

What Mr. Sulzberger did was take the blame for the sourness of the world we live in. "You weren't supposed to be graduating into an America fighting a misbegotten war in a foreign land."

That's true. And we weren't supposed to be born into a country fighting a war that was manifestly misbegotten but that was endorsed by the overwhelming majority of legislators, Democrat and Republican. And it isn't misbegotten because it is being fought "in a foreign land." The very best thing about most American wars is that they are fought in foreign lands, not on native soil.

Which of our wars have been outright misbegotten is difficult to say, inasmuch as all wars are testimony to failed diplomacy. Half a million people died in World War I, into which President Woodrow Wilson led us. Liberal intellectuals, we were invited to assume at SUNY, don't do that kind of thing. They are too . . .

A problem. Too what? Mr. Sulzberger,

having read all those other commencement speeches, said: "Ninety-five percent of them come down to this: 'Today you enter the real world. Follow your heart. Find what you love and do it.' Who can argue with such wisdom? It's sort of a motherhood-and-apple-pie statement."

There are two difficulties with that generality. The first is that it is not always wise to do that which you love, which could include shooting commencement speakers. The second is that there is absolutely nothing wrong with devotion to apple pie, let alone motherhood.

Today's speaker was comprehensively at odds with the world he lives in. Citing his own experience as a graduate in 1974, he said that he and his classmates had "entered the world committed to making it a better, safer, cleaner, more equal place. We were determined not to repeat the mistakes of our predecessors. . . . You weren't supposed to be graduating into a world where we are still fighting for fundamental human rights, be it the rights of immigrants to start a new life, the rights of gays to marry, or the rights of women to choose."

That formulation asks us to believe that certain things in philosophical and political contention oughtn't to be contended, it being so obvious that there is only a single correct position in the matter. The graduating student was being asked to assume that the 50 million Americans who believe in tender loving care for unborn children are misbegotten in their concern, even as they were wrong to have voted for a human-rights-oriented foreign policy in Iraq. And Mr. Sulzberger should have taken just a moment to say to the graduates: At least we brought you this, a world in which a Communist superpower no longer threatens freedom in the world.

"This is my first-ever commencement speech," the speaker said, "and, depending on your reviews, may be my last." The prospect of 30 commencement speeches in the future by the same speaker brings to mind *The New Yorker* cartoon depicting a naked Martian woman under a tree, with a naked Martian man by her side and a serpent in the foreground. The woman is reaching up for an apple when an exercised astronaut, just landed on the scene, comes running toward her. The caption says: "Miss! Oh, Miss! For God's sake, stop!"

Same-Sex Amendment?

NEW YORK, JUNE 6

KEY administration figures have involved themselves in the matter of the amendment to limit marriage to members of complementary sexes. Mrs. Bush was heard to say on television that she hoped the question would not become a "campaign tool." To let this happen, she suggested, would remove it from the moral plane on which it should travel.

Mrs. Bush's appeal, however appealing, is not likely to inform the debate ahead. Almost all public issues tend to be politicized. The rule shouldn't be strictly applied, but it is generally so that liberals, whose party is Democratic, tend to permissive alternatives. In the debate on Prohibition, which was passed with overwhelming popular endorsement in 1917, the anti-liquor forces were associated with that part of America on the warpath against sinful practices. It was a decade before liberals consolidated their position in favor of repeal, as urged by FDR.

But those who wish to make a libertarian point against the amendment currently proposed have got to grope for appropriate language, which doesn't come readily to mind. Because the point at issue has to do not exclusively with connubial relations, but with the sanctions that are visited by the state on connubial unions. It is one thing for a state to decree that a man cannot have sexual relations with another man—such an intrusion attempts prohibitions which are blissfully unenforceable.

What the Supreme Court ruled in *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003) was that sodomy is protected under the 14th Amendment. It did not rule that the state of Texas was required to enshrine homosexual unions as "marriages."

The making of civil laws is a political enterprise. States have differed over the years on what it is that is required in order to qualify for a marriage license. The most obvious differences have had to do with age. Others require variable lengths of time between the filing of an application and the issuance of a license.

It is important to stress the point made by the president in advancing his defense of the marriage act. Sure, it has moral implications, but there is more to the

amendment than that. What it seeks to do is to guard the right of individual states to devise their own requirements in the matter of marriage. We know that contemporary interpretations of the authority of the courts have had the effect of nullifying state authority in the matter. Already in Massachusetts, the highest state court has ruled that a law defining marriage conflicts with what amounts to state constitutional rights. It is the point here that in an age of judicial activism, we have in effect the nullification of state laws. No case challenging a state law affirming the traditional understanding of marriage has yet come before the Supreme Court. But there is no reason to bet that when faced with such a law, that Court will deny itself the authority to override states that affirm traditional distinctions.

It is a pity that more time is not given to the question of state vs. federal authority. The reason for this has to do with the tendency of the Supreme Court in past decades to set itself up as a moral tribunal for the entire country. That superordination of the judiciary can't be coped with except by a constitutional asseveration, and the only way to do this is by an amendment.

On the matter of how this will play politically, we have as the major contender the gay lobby. It is asking individual states to extend to homosexual unions the same accommodations it makes to marriages. That is a direct challenge to traditional assumptions. If a demand were made merely to extend identical protections to gay unions in matters of tax or inheritance, the issue could be negotiated without fearing to step on judicial toes.

As it works out, the Democratic party will almost certainly associate itself with the opposition to the amendment—pleading individual "rights." Whether Mr. Bush can succeed in bringing proper attention to the real issues at stake is, unhappily, bound up in the question of the prestige he now has, diminished by matters that do not affect the reasoning of his appeal for a constitutional amendment.

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happy warrior

MARK STEYN

The Wisdom of George Soros's Tenant

A COUPLE of years ago, I was asked a question about the United Nations and replied that it was a good basic axiom that if you took a quart of ice cream and mixed it with a quart of dog feces the result would taste more like the latter than the former. There was a useful example of that the other day from a leading Turtle Bay honcho.

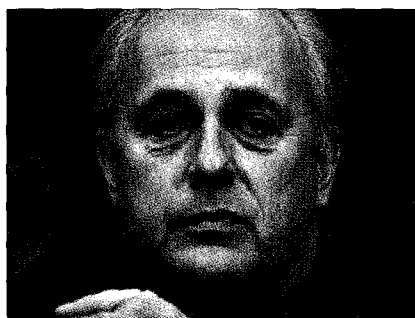
Now, I confess I have a sneaking admiration for the more shameless transnational apparatchiks: Two years ago, you may recall, Sudan was reelected to the U.N. Human Rights Commission at a time when the government's proxies were busy slaughtering and gang-raping their way round Darfur. The last thing one needs when one's got a hectic schedule of mass murder on one's plate is a lot of tedious paper-shuffling committee meetings in New York, but Sudan's deputy ambassador, Omar Bashir Manis, gamely rose to the occasion by announcing, upon joining the commission, that he was very concerned about human-rights abuses at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib.

I gotta hand it to the guy. For the emissary of a blood-soaked genocidal psycho state, that's pretty funny. But the danger, when you enroll the free nations and the thug states in the same club, isn't that they meet each other halfway but that the Free World winds up going two-thirds, three-quarters, seven-eighths of the way. Consider the speech the other day by Kofi Annan's deputy.

Who's he? Some bespoke apologist for some banana republic or Islamist basketcase? Not at all. He's called Mark Malloch Brown and he's one of those smooth-talking Brits. The bit in the speech that got everyone's attention was when he argued that the reason the U.N. was so unpopular in America was that the moronic hayseeds in flyover country had

fallen for the right-wing blowhards—or, as he put it, “much of the public discourse that reaches the U.S. heartland has been largely abandoned to its loudest detractors such as Rush Limbaugh and Fox News.” He didn't, in fact, say “Limbaugh” but “Lim-bow,” as in “Daddy Wouldn't Buy Me a Bow-Wow.” A chap as important as Mr. Malloch Brown can't be expected to tune in a radio and actually listen to Rush in order to get his name correct: After all, he's a lot busier than those dimwit yokels in the “heartland.”

Blaming their woes on talk radio isn't all the U.N.'s learned from the Democrats. The deputy secretary general's fellow speakers at this meeting included George Soros, who happens to be Mr. Malloch Brown's next-door neighbor



Mark Malloch Brown: Sockin' it to the rubes

and landlord. Mr. Malloch Brown earns \$125,000 a year, \$120,000 of which he gives to Mr. Soros as rent for his home, next to the gazillionaire's own in Westchester County. When they entered into this relationship, Mr. Malloch Brown was head of the U.N. Development Program, which works with Mr. Soros on many multimillion-dollar projects. The deputy secretary general insists there's nothing “improper” in his mixing of his professional and personal lives, and, indeed, by the ethical standards of the U.N.—which is to say, the Oil-for-Fraud program, the Child-Sex-for-Food program, etc.—there isn't.

Mr. Malloch Brown is an international civil servant. Were he merely a national civil servant at Britain's Department of Health or Transport, it would have been unthinkable for him to have rented a home for 96 percent of his salary from the

chairman of GlaxoSmithKline or Virgin Atlantic Airways. But at the U.N. it's not just thinkable but doable: When in Turtle Bay, do as the Ghanaians do. And Mr. Malloch Brown is widely regarded as the agent of reform. Or, at any rate, “reform.”

The deputy secretary general's speech was an artful one, arguing that, in a world where “new national-security challenges basically thumb their noses at old notions of national sovereignty,” the U.S. needs the U.N. On closer inspection, what he means is that the U.N. needs the U.S.—to supply money, troops, money, equipment, money, technology, and money. In a complicated world, the U.S. isn't big enough to go it alone, but it is big enough to give everything it's got to the U.N., and in return the U.N. will hold meetings explaining why the U.S. can't go it alone or with anyone else. In a nicely Sudanese touch, Mr. Malloch Brown announced that “my kids were on the Mall in Washington, demanding President Bush to do more to end the genocide in Darfur” but that the president couldn't do more in Darfur without the U.N.

Er, hang on. On Darfur, Bush has been impeccably transnational. He agreed to go the U.N. route and, as always happens, everybody's dead.

Forget Darfur, and Iraq, and Iran. We're all men of the world here, we can all understand why certain powers might feel it was in their interest to be pro-Saddam or pro-genocide or pro-nuking Israel. Instead, take an issue on which the permanent members of the Security Council were in perfect harmony: the tsunami. Even the French aren't protsunami. And yet Malloch Brown's permanent 24/7 lavishly funded humanitarian bureaucracy was useless. The only actual relief effort—you know, saving lives, restoring the water supply, providing shelter—was done by the U.S., Australia, and a handful of others.

The United Nations is a September 10th organization. Five years on, to leave Iran or even Darfur in its hands is as ludicrous as Churchill and Roosevelt's fretting over whether they had the League of Nations' approval to launch D-Day. The urbane cynicism of Malloch Brown is very revealing: The problem with transnationalism is not what it does to the Sudanese and Ghanaians; it's what it does to us.

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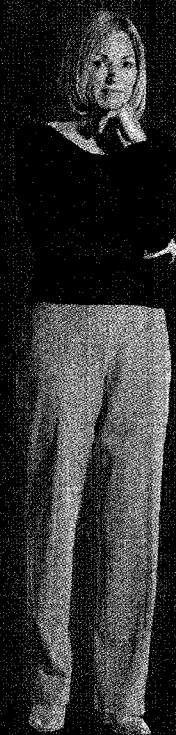
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